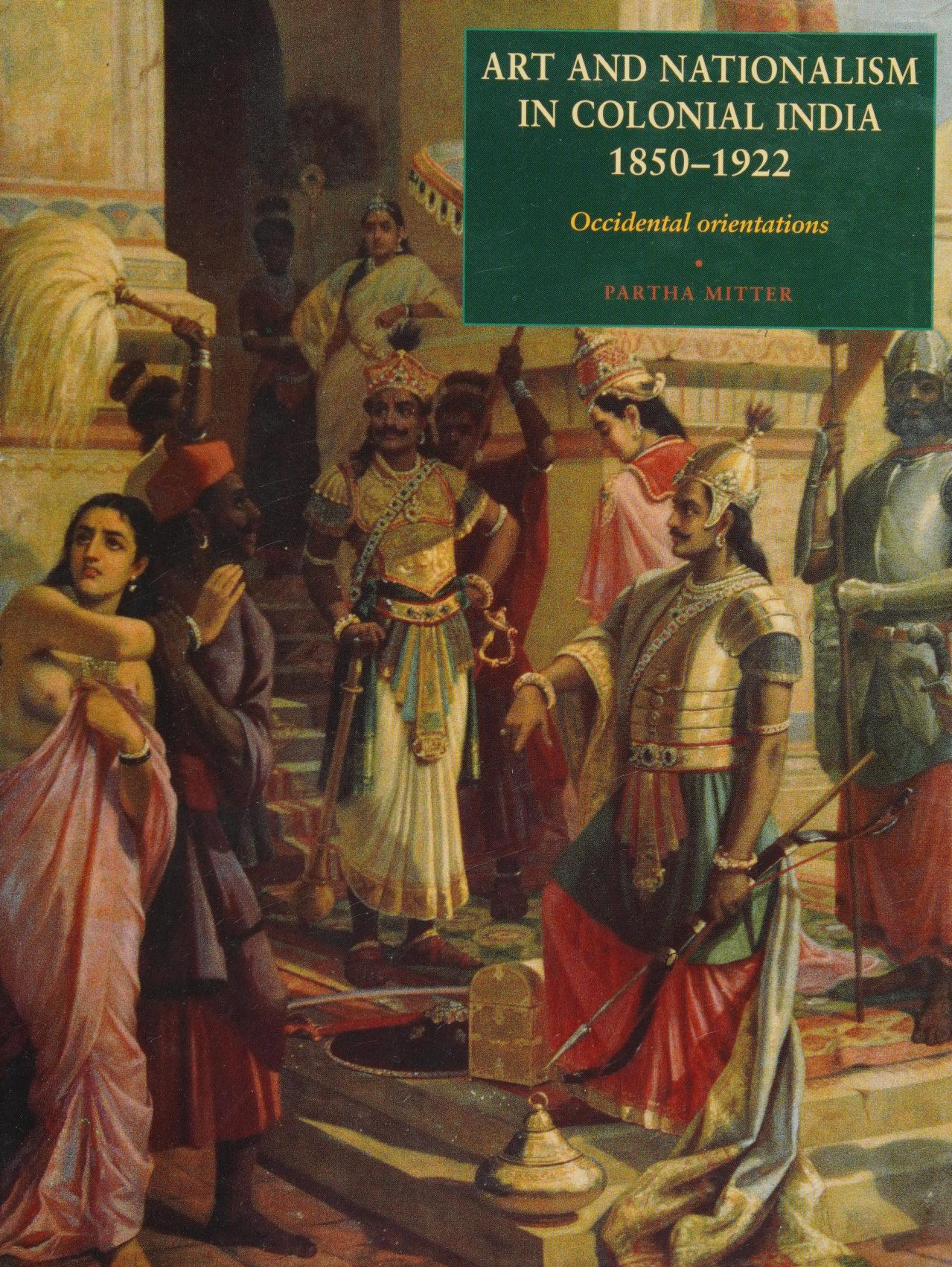
ART AND NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL INDIA 1850–1922

Occidental orientations

PARTHA MITTER



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Partha Mitter's book is a pioneering study of the history of modern art on the Indian subcontinent. The author tells the story of Indian art during the Raj, set against the interplay of colonialism and nationalism. The work addresses the tensions and contradictions that attended the advent of European naturalism in India, as part of the imperial design for the westernisation of the elite, and traces the artistic evolution from unquestioning westernisation to the construction of Hindu national identity.

Through a wide range of literary and pictorial sources, *Art and nationalism in colonial India* balances the study of colonial cultural institutions and networks with the ideologies of the nationalist and intellectual movements which followed. The result is a book of immense significance both in the context of South Asian history and in the wider context of art history.

Partha Mitter is lecturer in modern South Asian history at the University of Sussex. His publications include *Much maligned monsters: history of European reactions to Indian art* (1977, 1992).

Vidya Devgan

Partha Mitter's book is a pioneering study of modern art (1850–1922) on the Indian subcontinent. The author tells the story of Indian art during the Raj, set against the interplay of colonialism and nationalism. The work addresses the tensions and contradictions that attended the advent of European naturalism in India, as part of the imperial design for the westernisation of the elite, and traces the artistic evolution from unquestioning westernisation to the construction of Hindu national identity. It seeks to go beyond both conventional art history, which portrays the western influences on Indian art in terms of a superior culture dominating a passive one, and the alternative view that condemns western cultural dominance but fails to allow any form of indigenous expression.

There can be no doubt that Indian taste was profoundly altered by the introduction of the western art school, and the exhibitions that replaced traditional artisans with 'gentlemen' artists. The availability of mass prints meant that ordinary people came into contact with art for the first time. However, the promotion of an indigenous art by the nationalist Bengal school in the early twentieth century aimed at presenting a real alternative to colonial representational art. The nationalist definition of indigenous art did not go uncontested, which gave rise to debates that impinged on nationalist politics.

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Art and nationalism in colonial India, 1850–1922

FRONTISPIECE: Bhārat Mātā
(Mother India) by
Abanindranath Tagore,
c. 1905

ART AND NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL INDIA

1850–1922

Occidental orientations

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To Swasti, Rana and Pamina

and to the memory of my boyhood friends

Amal (1937–1980) and Surojit (1937–1989)

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Bose, Nandalal (1882–1966)
Chughtai, Abdur Rahman (1897–1975)
Datta, Girindra Kumar (1841–1909)
Dhurandhar, Mahadev Visvanath (1867–1944)
Gangooly, Jamini Prakash (1876–1953)
Ganguly, Surendranath (1885–1909)
Haldar, Asit Kumar (1890–1964)
Hesh, Sashi Kumar (1869–?)
Majumdar, Kshitindranath (1891–1975)
Mhatre, Ganpat Kashinath (1876–1947)
Muller, Archibald Herman (1878–1952)
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Pithawalla, Manchershaw (1872–1937)
Raghunath, Hansaji (b. early 19th C.)
Rahamin, Fyzee (Samuel), (1880–1965)
Rahiman, Abalal (1860–1931)
Raychaudhuri, Upendrakishore (1863–1915)
Rawal, Ravishankar (1892–1977)
Ray, Sukumar (1887–1923)
Sen, Jatin (1882–1966)
Tagore, Abanindranath (1871–1951)
Tagore, Gaganendranath (1867–1938)
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Varma, Raja Ravi (1848–1906)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

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Birdwood, Sir George (critic)
Chatterjee, Ramananda (journalist)
Coomaraswamy, A. K. (critic)
Jijibhai, Sir Jamsethji (patron)
Nivedita, Sister (social worker)
Okakura, Kakuzo (critic)
Ronaldshay, Lord (governor)
Samajpati, Suresh (critic)
Sayajirao III Gaekwad (patron)
Tagore, Balendranath (critic)
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Ghilardi, O. 1886–1905 (Calcutta)
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Havell, E. B. 1884–1906 (Calcutta)
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Jobbins, W. H. 1887–1895 (Calcutta)
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PREFACE

This is an old fashioned book. It does not claim to contribute to theory. Recently, my lectures in Chicago and New York disappointed devotees of cultural theory, who complained that my treatment dealt rather too much with human beings; I would strongly urge them not to open the book, for they will be saved further disappointment. My purpose is to tell the story of colonial art in a somewhat Proustian, or perhaps Mahlerian fashion; indeed the vast canvas of Indian colonial culture, with its conflicts of interests and the interactions between colonial hegemony and national self-imaging, reminds us of Mahler's symphonies. I have tried to capture a small part of it.

I first began thinking on the subject in 1968 when Eric Stokes invited me to lecture to Cambridge undergraduates on Indian art. What then intrigued me was the question that is still faced by Indian artists: by responding to western art does one lose one's cultural integrity?* Of course, this is not an easy question to answer; nor can there be any clear answers to it. But what I have tried to do here is to raise this central problematic of colonialism, the response of the colonised to the dominant cultural canon imposed by colonial rule, forcing the colonised to confront his own identity. Here I must declare an interest: since childhood I have painted though I was never bold enough to take it up as a vocation. But the question had a special resonance for me.

In my treatment of Indian art during the colonial period I have been selective rather than exhaustive, aiming to raise certain problems rather than provide final answers. On the formal level the book, conceived in terms of a prologue, two central acts and a short epilogue, attempts a kind of 'Burckhardtian' symmetry. A field so rich and diverse was not possible to approach without the generosity of individuals. I am in their debt. During my fieldwork in India, the extremes of treatment I received from my compatriots make fascinating reading. At one extreme was secretiveness, jealousy, a meretricious display of power and a lack of courtesy; at the other end was the unselfish kindness of friends where virtually

*My ideas about art and nationalism were first summarised in *History Today*, 32, July 1982, 28–34.

nothing was denied me: I recall with profound appreciation Satyajit Ray's generosity; sadly, he died before the book came out. I also wish to remember here R. P. Gupta who swiftly and affectionately took me under his wing; Foy Nissen, who was wonderfully generous with his time and shared my enthusiasm for the Bombay artists; Sanat Saha who transcribed by hand page after page of key articles for me simply because he did not have access to a photocopying machine.

My thanks also go to V. R. Amberkar, V. Asokan, Suhash Bahulkar, Bikashkali Basu, Nalini Bhagwat, Jyoti Bhatt, Anjan Chakravarty, S. K. Chavan, Arif Rahman Chughtai, Protap Chandra Chunder, Prafulla Dahanukar, Asok Das, Parul Dave, Sarayu Doshi, Ambika and K. Dhurandhar, The Gaekwads of Baroda, Sadashiv Gorakshkar, S. R. Ghorpade, Bhaskar Ghosh, Shalil Ghosh, S. N. Ghosal, Salman Haidar, Adhish Haldar, Leela Iyengar and family, A. P. Jamkhedkar, C. D. Joshi, A. S. Kate, N. P. Khanvilkar, Moti Khanna, Ebba and Benno Koch, Mary Lago, Indranath Majumdar, Bimal Maitra, Satyen Maitra, Hemendro Mullik, S. P. Mitra, Rabindranath and Pushpa Mitter, Ranu Mookerjee, L. Munuswamy, C. D. Narasimhaiah, Bruce Palling, Ratan Parimoo, Nishith Ranjan Ray, Tapan Raychaudhuri, Bela Raval, Rekha Rodwittiya, Pradyot Roy, S. C. Roy, Baburao Sadwelkar, Nikhil Sarkar, Sandip Sarkar, Gulam Mohamed Shaikh, Michael Smith, Subho Tagore, Woodman Taylor, K. Thomas, Mr and Mrs Ben Thorne, Andrew and Helen Topsfield, Carmen Trindade, Ravi Varma's family, especially R. M. Varma, Bhaskara Varma, Indira Varma, K. C. Rama Varma and Rukmini Varma.

The staff of the British Library (especially Lawrence Smith and Richard Blurton), Victoria & Albert Museum library and Indian department (especially the present keeper Deborah Swallow and the previous keeper Robert Skelton, John Guy, Susan Stronge, Betty Tyres and other members of the department), Asiatic Society Library, Bombay (N. S. Chetty), Bharat Kala Bhavan, Indian Museum, Calcutta (especially S. Chakravarty), the National Library, Calcutta (especially Ashin Das Gupta and R. Deb), the staff of Indian Society of Oriental Art (G. Roy), Calcutta, the Government Museum, Madras (especially N. Harinarayana), National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi (especially the Director, Anis Farooqi, and K. S. Mathur, Satyender Kumar Gupta, P. K. Roy), the directors of Sri Jayachamarajendra Gallery (S. T. Sathyamurti), Mysore and Sri Chitra Art Gallery (K. Rajendra Babu), Trivandrum, New York Public Library, Firestone and Marquand Libraries, Princeton University, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Regenstein Library, Chicago, India Office Library (especially Richard Bingle, Dipali Ghosh, Patricia Herbert and Jerry Losty), School of Oriental and African Studies Library and The Senate House Library, London, Sussex University Library (especially Bet Inglis), The Wellcome Institute Library, London (especially W. Schupbach), Rabindra Bharati Society (especially Ananda

Kumar Mukherjee), Rabindra Bharati University, Bangiya Sahitya Parisad, Kala Bhavana and Rabindra Bhavana (especially the late Sanat Bagchi), Shantiniketan, Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Sir J. J. School of Art (especially Vasant Parab), Government Art College, Calcutta (the past Principal Chintamoni Kar) and the Ananda Bazar Publications also have me in their debt.

I have been favoured with generous grants from diverse sources: the Leverhulme Trust for my exploratory field trip. A year at the Institute For Advanced Study at Princeton enabled me to develop my ideas in 1981–82. But this work would certainly not have seen the light of day without my election to a British Academy Readership in 1985–87. The Academy also offered me a travel grant to complete my field trip in India. I am in J. B. Trapp and Richard Gombrich's debt for their staunch support in this crucial period. I also thank the University of Sussex Research Support Fund for travel grants. Those who read drafts of the work include Peter Dronke who had the onerous task of proof-reading a number of versions; John Burrow who read the semi-final draft, Rodney Needham who made incisive comments on the introduction and Andrew Robinson who read the final draft. To all of them I offer my thanks. Sir Ernst Gombrich, my former teacher, as always, offered kind advice and generous support at all stages of the enterprise. Computer secrets were unravelled by Charles Wordingham and Ryan Banerjee, while Colin Atherton helped me take better photographs. Among typists I wish to thank Sarah Jack, Gowrie Wignaraja and Graham Perrin. Finally, any research of this nature is a veritable cottage industry and I cannot afford to forget my ever patient family.

Brighton
June, 1993

GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Abhijāt: aristocratic

babu (baboo): same as bhadralok but 'baboo' is the derogatory English word to refer to the same people. I make the distinction between babu and baboo in the text to emphasise two distinct uses which reflect the different perceptions of the Bengali elite. 'Babu' is transliterated from Bengali and stands for 'gentleman' in Bengali. It is similar to the uses of 'Mr' and 'sir' in English. 'Baboo' spelt this way is the British description of a clownish Bengali clerk.

bhadralok: literally gentlefolk in Bengali but is used by historians to refer to the Bengali western-educated elite, hence a social group

bhava: sanskrit literary-aesthetic term meaning feeling, sentiment, idea, conceit

Chatterjee (Chattopadhaya): variant spelling of a Bengali surname

Gangoly (Gangooly): variant spelling of a Bengali surname

Mototai: Japanese watercolour technique

Orientalist: European scholar dealing with the East, a subject called Orientalism

orientalist: used in the work to denote nationalist artists who painted in a non-salon style of art

pat (patua): traditional Bengali scroll painting and patua, its practitioner

westerniser: denotes here salon artists in India who opposed orientalists

BAS: Bombay Art Society

CAS: Calcutta Art Studio

DPI: Director of Public Instruction

IOL: India Office Library

ISOA: Indian Society of Oriental Art

JIAI: Journal of Indian Art and Industry

JRSA: Journal of the Royal Society of Arts

PWD: Public Works Department

RR: Rabindra Rachanbali (collected works of Rabindranath Tagore)

RRV: Raja Varma Diary

Dosefei: The Trumpets of Eternity
The time has come now to win from the flames
a martyr's crown and life everlasting!

(The Old Believers, dressed in white robes,
enter one by one, bearing lighted candles.
Some of them heap up a pyre.)

Marfa: Did you not hear, resounding through the forest,
trumpets that announce the coming of Tsar Peter's
soldiers?
Our cause is lost, we are surrounded . . .

Old Believers: Lord God Almighty, reveal to us Thy glory!

Dosefei: Brethren, our time is near,
and soon the radiance of Heavenly Love will
fill our hearts! . . .
(Marfa lights the pyre with her candle . . . They all perish
in flames. The trumpeters enter, followed by the Tsar's
guards. All draw back in horror at the sight of the pyre.)
(The curtain slowly falls.)

Khovanshchina Scene VI
(Modest Mussorgsky)★

★The English translation is by Sir Edward Downes for the 1982 Royal Opera House, Covent Garden production.

PART ONE
PROLOGUE

I THE PHENOMENON: OCCIDENTAL ORIENTATIONS

THE ARGUMENT

I have chosen the final scene of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* as an epigraph to represent a political parable. Strange as it may seem, there is a connection between the Russian opera and colonial art in India. Westernisation, the subject of endless debate in our post-colonial world, is the theme of the opera, which is about Peter the Great's reform of the Russian Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century. In the ensuing schism, the Old Believers demonstrated their faith by committing mass self-immolation rather than submit to modern ideas. Unlike the reforming Tsar, Mussorgsky belonged to an age that no longer viewed western progress as an unmixed blessing. But it took the genius of Mussorgsky to turn his personal credo into a masterpiece that compels us to re-examine the responses of traditional societies to westernisation. The opera brings to life as much the tensions and contradictions within westernisation itself as what it actually means to its recipients. Ever since Tsar Peter decided to open the 'western window' to let in the wind of change, he set the scene for a continuing dialectic between time-honoured values and innovative ideas.[1]

The most dramatic transformation of these traditional societies was in the material sphere, affecting not merely their economic structures but also their social behaviour and modes of thinking. People in these societies associated Europe with 'modern' values. In their eyes, the contrast between their own static systems and the West, with its superior technology and confident social development, was painfully evident. Of the manifold impact of the West on non-western cultures, none is so intriguing and yet unexplored as their responses to European naturalist art. Unlike the more obvious impact of technology, the reception of European academic art in the East has been less even, oscillating between enthusiastic acceptance and vehement resistance. In art where judgements of value are not so absolute, the consequences of westernisation were more elusive and problematic. It is this aspect of westernisation with its implications for national identity that lies at the heart of my enquiry.[2]

The particular question to be probed is this: how can one make sense of

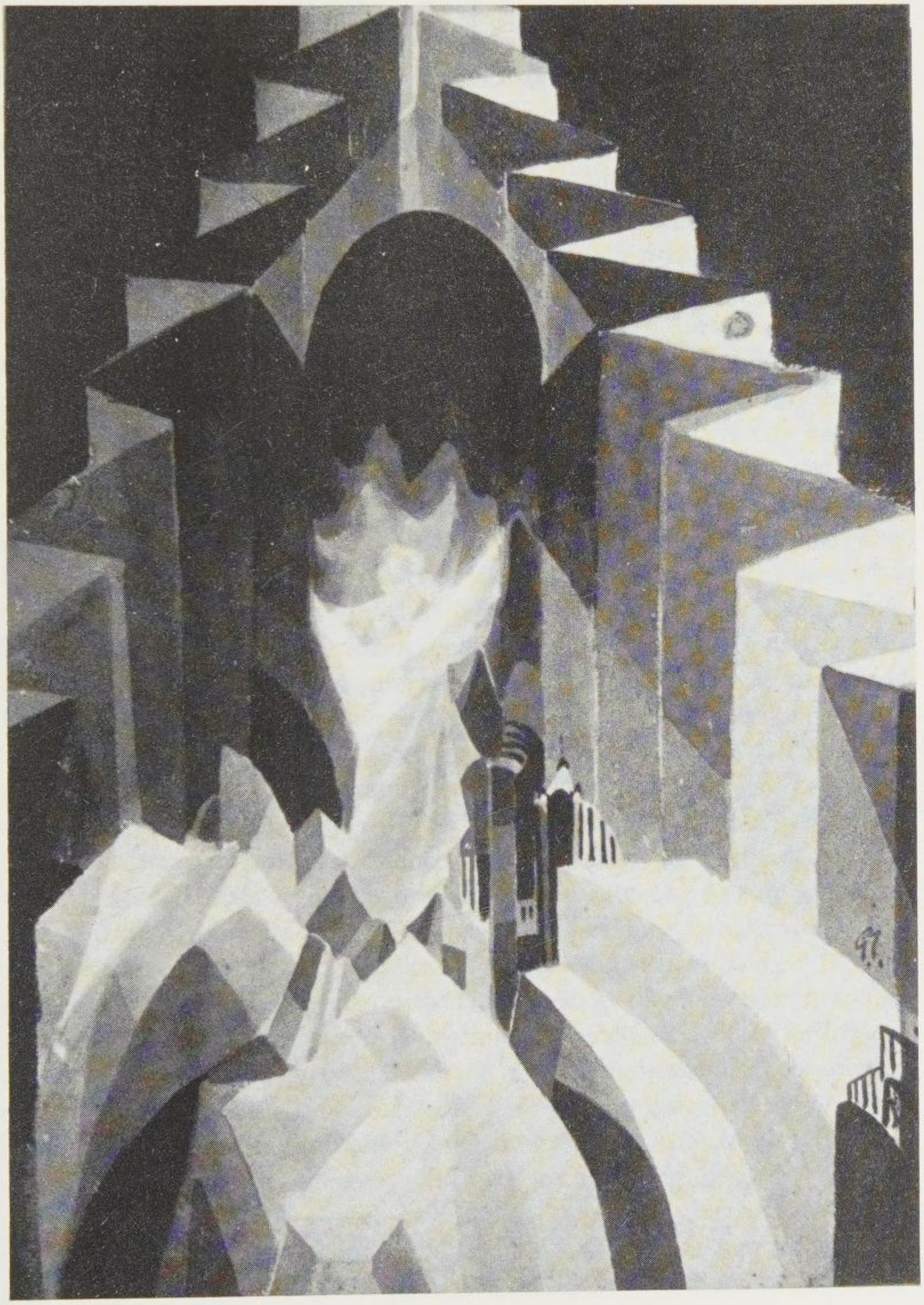
the complexities of Indian responses to European colonial art – the tensions, the ruptures and the rich multivalences hidden within the process of westernisation? One approach would be conventional art history, that is, to chart a 'genealogy' of influences and to draw up a 'ledger' of European sources used by colonial artists. This was the approach favoured by W. G. Archer in his pioneering study, *India and Modern Art* (1959). The value of his elegant work lay in uncovering the dominant western influences on Indian artists. Indeed the West had provided a powerful impulse to artistic development.[3]

As a pioneering work, Archer's book raised important questions, but naturally others remained unanswered. And it is these that my own work addresses. What was absent from Archer's book was any consideration of the aims of the artists studied, or their motivations. Hence their achievements made little sense to the author. Had Archer made use of sources in the original languages, they would have given him an insight into the cultural climate in which these works were produced. Instead the volume was limited to an external consideration: to what extent did these Indian artists emulate, successfully or unsuccessfully, their purported European models? Yet surely the failure or success of these appropriations depended not so much on how close they were to their western sources as on what they meant in the society that gave rise to these artists. In other words, *India and Modern Art* failed to consider 'artistic intention' in its historical setting. For instance, Gaganendranath Tagore, whose paintings were compared with those of Picasso (see, for example, Fig. 1), was taken to be a '*cubiste manqué*'. The question is, according to this view, how much do we learn about the specific cultural experience of the Indian artist? Apart from the fact that Cubism was simply a point of departure for Gaganendranath, one looks more profitably at his paintings not as pale shadows of Cubism but as yielding rich new poetic nuances that were meaningful in the Indian cultural milieu.[4]

In short, the moment one goes beyond Archer's implicit assumption that the borrower as such is inferior, other more historically interesting aspects of cultural encounters come into focus. Let me illustrate by an art historical example, but which is unique to our own age: the proliferation of cultural borrowings, made possible by the dramatic expansion of the means of communication. Print technology and museums gave the modern urban world, in the metropolis and in its peripheries, an unprecedented access to cultures separated by time and space. In an instant artists became armchair travellers. Initially, European artists had access to an enormous range of styles from their own past which made possible the rise of 'historicism'; later the net was cast in the 'foreign waters' of the non-western world, especially primitive societies, in order to haul in a rich 'catch'. The artist as 'archaeologist' had his impact not only in the West but wherever European institutions were implanted.[5]

The voracious appetite for past styles and for styles of other cultures in

the present by modern artists (in East and West) was attended by an inevitable disregard of the cultural backgrounds of their sources. The most obvious European case is the use of primitive art by Cubists and Expressionists. But in some ways a more profound effect of the non-western world was on non-figurative artists. In his essay, *On the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky made an intriguing connection: 'the "crudely" sculptured columns of an Indian temple are informed with the same spirit



1 Gaganendranath Tagore: *The Song of Dawn*, gouache

as most living modern work'.[6] Indian religious thought, filtered through the Theosophical writings of Helena Blavatsky, Rudolf Steiner and Annie Besant, inspired Kandinsky's images of colour music. The yogic system, expounded in Swami Vivekananda's Chicago lectures, played a part in the art of Malevich and his circle.[7] In this fascinating 'world upside-down', the Indian painters turned to the West while the European avant-garde headed East for inspiration. It is only when one sees cultural borrowings, such as Gaganendranath Tagore's, in this light, that they take on a new complexion. In short, today it is not only the artistic sources but also their cultural transformations that hold our attention.

Why is it that the actual transformations of western sources by colonial artists have not aroused much interest until now? In art-historical scholarship, because of the privileged position of western art, borrowings of European and non-European artists are evaluated differently. The exhibition on 'Primitivism in Modern Art', held in New York in 1985, was at pains to dismiss the 'affinities' between Picasso's works and primitive art as entirely coincidental.[8] The plain fact is, the tracing of influences vis-à-vis western and non-western art is not a 'value-free' exercise. Of course, there is no intrinsic reason why borrowing as such should be demeaning. Arguably, the development of mankind rests on the fact that societies freely share each other's experiences. In Classical antiquity syncretism was a common practice in Neoplatonism and other intellectual movements. Ancient Greeks, subjugated by the Romans, were nonetheless admired by their masters for their intellect. Yet, however much one wishes that delineating influences were a neutral exercise, in the context of colonialism, it becomes difficult to ascribe influences in a way that does not automatically presume the inferiority of the borrower. This 'hidden assumption' remains the bedrock of colonial discourse. The inability to see influence in terms other than plagiarism stems from the fact that colonial (and post-colonial) art criticism is unable to detach itself from the values of imperialism, anchored in power relations. As such, it remains a prisoner of its own reductionism. The impact of European naturalism on Indian artists, for instance, is viewed simply as a superior culture dominating an inferior, passive one.[9]

Orientalists and apologists of empire, who propound this image, naturally give prominence to the passive nature of the colonised. But the image continues even in recent critiques of colonialism which take a negative view of East–West encounters. For example, Edward Said, in his classic study, *Orientalism*, chooses Marx's famous statement – the orientals cannot represent themselves; they must be represented – to show how a certain body of knowledge about the Orient was pressed into the service of colonial ideology. An unintended effect of such a post mortem has been to perpetuate the very stereotype of the passive oriental which his own work set out to challenge. Both Orientalists and their critics, who are diametrically opposed to each other, essentially treat the history of the

colonisers, rather than the colonised. As such, both of them neglect the individual responses of the colonised to the historical situation in which they found themselves.[10]

The general answers advanced with regard to the westernisation of Asia still do not resolve an art historical puzzle: why did academic naturalism oust earlier Indian art in the colonial period with such ease? Colonial policy only tells part of the story; part of the answer also lies in the revolutionary impact of Renaissance art in India as elsewhere. In eighteenth-century Japan for instance, artists were dazzled by western illusionism, by what E. H. Gombrich calls, 'the technological aspect of art' – how to render an object convincingly. We find Mughal artists in India eagerly emulating western perspective, anatomy and chiaroscuro. Indeed the acceptance of technological superiority in art can sometimes take place independently of political domination. It may simply follow the demands of patrons such as the emperor Akbar who was intrigued by Mannerist art. At the same time, colonial rule added a special edge to the introduction of naturalism in India and subsequent reactions against it.[11]

The limitations of concentrating solely on western influence, whether viewed as a civilising or a destructive force, lie in relegating the artist to a passive role. It simply fails to take into account the complex and discriminating relationship between an artist and his intellectual sources. Therefore, until and unless one goes beyond western representations as such and turns to the colonised themselves, they will continue to be deprived of an authentic voice. I think the time has come for them to sing their own song, however discordant or untrained it may appear at first, compared with the grand imperial symphonies. I prefer to focus on the relations between western art as a specific source in the colonial era, and its cultural transformations by Indian artists – while accepting that the options before the Indian artist existed within the confines of colonial hegemony.[12] The world of the colonial artists receives no less attention here than its art, as colonial ideologies and institutions are interwoven with stories of alliances and intrigues, of individual triumphs and personal tragedies.

My aims may become clear by contrasting them with those of earlier writers. *India and Modern Art*, for instance, relies almost entirely on external standards for its analyses of Indian artists. Moreover, an undue emphasis on western influence, I suggest, blurs individual choices and conflicting objectives in any given situation. One of the gains of recent historical writing has been to move away from paradigms to unravelling individual motives. We owe to social scientists the insight about what ideas, events and actions mean to those who are affected by them.[13] Burckhardt's continuing appeal, for instance, lies in his brilliant re-creation of the Renaissance as lived by its main actors. My ambitions of imagining the India of the Raj, of probing 'occidental orientations' in terms of the self-image of Indian artists, rest on this faith in the irreducibility of human experience. Indian colonial art now belongs to colonial history, whose motivations

we seek to unravel. This demands the recognition that the past, however recent, is a form of otherness. Even if our own judgements cannot be eliminated altogether, they can no longer take precedence. Of course, if the past bears no relation to our present concerns, its study will remain a species of antiquarianism that merely celebrates its alien character. Because of these conflicting forces, historical analysis becomes a delicate balancing act. While accepting our own perspective, we respond imaginatively to the ineluctable 'foreignness' of the past.

Secondly, 'colonial discourse' suffers from a sense of pre-destination; this produces a monocular vision of the destiny of nations and overlooks the specific cultural expressions of westernisation. Even if India shared certain global assumptions about colonialism, its own experience was rooted in its history; Indian colonial art, for instance, represented a dialogue between western ideas and a search for Hindu identity. The arts of the different colonised peoples were their variegated responses to westernisation, their myriad reactions to European progress, whether to challenge it or not. In so doing, they were answering the colonial powers' claims to superiority based on a doctrine of cultural difference (the progressive European versus the unchanging oriental for instance) – a sense of superiority symbolised in art by academic naturalism. In short, one does not deny the impact of the West in order to discern the nuances in the responses of each colonised nation. 'The abstract standard of value, divorced from society and divorced from history', as E. H. Carr once said, 'is as much an illusion as the abstract individual'.[14]

A comparison between Indian colonial art and that of other colonised peoples brings out its culturally specific character. Of different models of colonial art, Mexico produced revolutionary murals of great intensity inspired by the violent upheavals of 1910–17. Diego Rivera, called the most Mexican of painters, offered in his art 'the practical sense of our pre-Hispanic traditions, of the values of colonical mysticism, of the varied nature of Mexican popular art'.[15] Even though the Mexican revolution marked a period of national self-discovery, with Rivera wishing to reproduce the basic images of the land, his works belong firmly within the Italian fresco tradition. For him pre-Hispanic motifs, rather than an indigenous style, represented the nation. Likewise, the Brazilian nationalist art, the 'Semana de Arte Moderna' movement of 1922, was thoroughly avant-garde in idiom, even as the artists incorporated Negro and Indian elements in their works.[16]

In short, if colonialism was common to India and Latin America, their differences were equally marked. Unlike Mexico, for instance, the Indian freedom movement was a political rather than social revolution. Its aim was to transfer power from foreign rulers to the native ruling classes. Apart from the early phase of the Gandhian movement, there was no revolutionary environment for the artists to be drawn into. Nor did their art, with the notable exceptions of Nandalal Bose and Ravishankar

Rawal, serve any direct political ends (p. 379). Indian artists as cultural nationalists were busy creating their own private images of an 'authentic' indigenous culture. By the 1920s, the earlier optimism about producing a national language of art had faded, but the dream of evolving a true Indian expression continued to haunt artists right down to 1947, the year of Indian independence.[17]

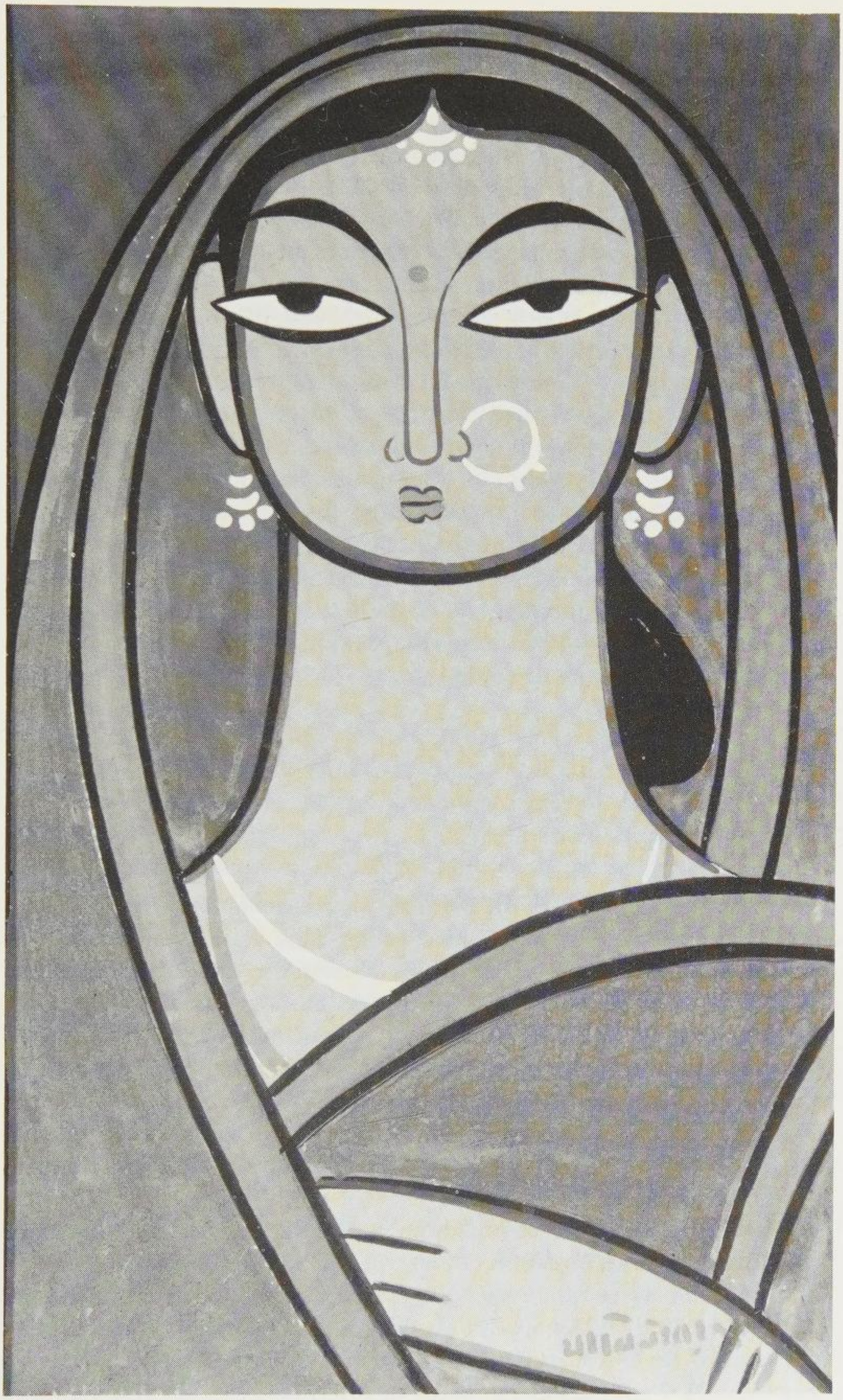
While Latin American art stood for political resistance, its faith in western progress as well as in western artistic idiom survived intact.[18] The Asian societies of India and Japan on the other hand faced the problem of reconciling their own artistic heritage with western innovations. Japan, unlike India, was never formally colonised. Yet paradoxically, it had to grapple with its cultural identity in the face of western dominance. The history of modern art in Japan may be seen as the oscillation between 'westernising' and 'orientalising' tendencies. In 1868, the Meiji government embarked on a wholesale introduction of European technology, political institutions and educational system, with a view to making Japan an international power. Academic naturalism arrived as part of the modernisation package, but it soon encountered opposition. 'Modernising' the arts could not be attempted in so clear-cut a manner as modernising technology. Borrowing selectively from the West, Japanese artists re-interpreted tradition in a period when cultural self-respect had assumed the highest priority.[19]

In India, early on, 'westernising' and 'orientalising' cultural waves provoked a debate on the status of European naturalism. The first period (c.1850–1900), an era of optimistic westernisation, was dominated by the pro-western groups. Their knowledge of English gave them the requisite edge over their more traditional compatriots, while their own social and cultural aspirations ensured a firm allegiance to European ideas and institutions. This was when the devices of Renaissance naturalism were introduced. The counterpoint (c.1900–22) was the cultural nationalism at the turn of the century. A new sensibility, expressed by the *swadeshi* (indigenous) doctrine of art, closely linked it to the emergent Hindu identity. It prompted a reassessment of the traditional heritage, from which the elite had recoiled in the first phase. As *swadeshi* artists put it, their alienation from academic art was not confined to form alone; it implied a whole new *Weltanschauung*, reflected in a nostalgia for the disappearing rural community. No wonder that early Indian nationalists were profoundly stirred by William Morris's pre-industrial utopia. The perceived opposition between 'pure' traditional and 'hybrid' colonial art sparked off a debate that affected the choice of a suitable style for artists during the nationalist struggle (see ch. 6). The life of this debate owed much to parallel developments in *swadeshi* politics, which demanded the creation of an indigenous expression that would be in harmony with Indian aspirations.

Finally, there remains a stumbling block in our assessment of Indian

artists of the colonial era. If I have implied that western taste as an absolute measure prevents European critics from appreciating artists of colonial India, it is by the same European criteria that art is still judged in India. To take several post-independence critics: the academic painter Ravi Varma is cited as someone 'who applied mechanically the crude realistic technique of the West'; the paintings of Abanindranath are given as instances of cloying effeminacy, 'which precluded the coming in of any visual experiences of the revolutionary paintings which Cézanne had carried out'; the radical simplifications of Jamini Roy (Fig. 2) are signs of honest robustness in an artist, for he 'grasped the simple fact that a painter is a creator and not an imitator'.[20] These typical judgements bear the obvious imprint of international modernism. The approval of Roy reflects the preference for simplicity of form to the 'anecdotal' character of Abanindranath's works, while Varma bears the full brunt of the anti-naturalist prejudice. Ironically, Abanindranath himself had won acclaim around 1906 for challenging the academic art of Varma. Yet further back, Varma (1848–1906) himself was the first colonial painter to be lionised for his mastery of representation.

Taste in colonial and post-colonial India, which has undergone a succession of phases with artists being in and out of fashion, closely follows events in the West. What was good taste yesterday is no longer so. When European naturalism replaced traditional aesthetics in the last century, the English-educated accepted Renaissance naturalism as the acme of perfection. The next generation asserted the opposite, seeking to set up an alternative canon of 'oriental' art. In the 1920s followed the phase of anti-naturalist modernism, which in a modified form still reigns. The cultivated Indian was impressed with the banner of anti-mimesis unfurled against the academic salon, as European abstract artists spurned Giotto for Cézanne. Kandinsky's search for affinities with Indian art belonged to the same anti-Classical artistic outlook.[21] Both the rejection of Varma for adopting 'crude western realism' and that of Abanindranath for his alleged effeminacy reflect modernist aesthetics. This perception is so taken for granted today that one forgets that not only European Classicism but also modernism were imported categories. In the 1920s the 'universal' rules of Renaissance art were simply replaced with the equally universal claims of modernism in India. On account of its radical stance against the academic salon, closely identified with colonialism, the European avant-garde was welcomed in India as being more in sympathy with the oppressed. In the 1990s, however, international modernism no longer sports a radical persona. One has become more sensitive to the fact that the 'international' style belonged to the larger process of modernisation of which colonialism was a part. Although the western avant-garde challenged some of the basic assumptions of the industrial age, nonetheless its debate with the 'capitalist–colonial' establishment was confined within the western 'equation of modernity, progress and rationality'.[22]



2 Jamini Roy: *Portrait of a Lady*, gouache

It matters little if anti-naturalist modernism is good taste in India today, as mimesis was in the nineteenth century. What does matter is the faith in absolute aesthetic values. This is so ingrained that it does not even merit a conscious mention, as artists and critics continue to live under the comforting shadow of the 'universal rules of art'. A universalism which denies that taste is culturally determined is the 'subtext' or the 'submerged' text of present Indian art criticism. The standards of this universalism, however, neither have an independent existence nor are they inspired by traditional Indian aesthetics. Whether the time has come for Indians to jettison global modernism is a matter that cannot be resolved here. Admittedly, earlier Indian artistic ideas ceased to matter from the British period onwards. But in applying a modernist aesthetic to the salon and 'orientalist' artists of the colonial period, one fails to give credit to their achievements. Let us remind ourselves that what the European avant-garde were rebelling against was academic illusionism; their judgements on naturalism still haunt the Indian critic. Even if one continues to use modernist (or post-modernist) criteria, one should at least be aware that these are no less part of the colonial cultural baggage. Unless the historian is discriminating about these received judgements, even if they happen to be his own taste, the unique character of the colonial mentality will continue to elude him.

THE ORIGINS

Pre-colonial art: taste in a melting pot

The ambitious art policy of the British Raj had much to do with the rapid spread of academic art in colonial India. This was facilitated by the gradual disintegration of taste that attended the end of the Mughal empire. In the eighteenth century, as the certainties of a confident society dissolved, certain developments softened the ground for the reception of European art. However, it was in the self-confident sixteenth century that western art made its first inroads into the Mughal court. In the next century, painters were incorporating elements from Mannerist art in their work in a playful disregard of Christian iconography, of whose meaning they were in any case ignorant.[23]

If European art had already made an impact, the colonial period may be seen as the logical culmination of that process. And yet, there was a world of difference between the two periods in the reception of European art. Unlike the Mughals, for whom European art was primarily exotica and marginal to their concerns, its introduction by the Raj was part of a comprehensive package that sought to reproduce the cultural values of the West. The introduction of Renaissance artistic equipage – foreshortening, linear perspective, chiaroscuro and other naturalist devices –

was helped by other elements – the Romantic image of the artist and the sentimental subject-matter of Victorian painting – in short, the entire ideological underpinning of nineteenth-century salon art. What emerges is the full range of European institutions that profoundly altered the meaning and function of art in Indian society; we see elite artists as enterprising individuals replacing traditional artisans, art societies taking over the functions of aristocratic patrons, and art schools as agents of the Raj, seeking to inculcate 'good taste' in its subjects.

The first of these sea changes related to the status of the artist and his self-perception as a unique individual, who was no longer prepared to be bound by social conventions, but followed his own destiny in the relentless pursuit of an artistic ideal. Compared with this exalted view of the artist, the artists' status in the pre-British period was, as in pre-Renaissance Europe, humble and traditionally defined, irrespective of the caste they belonged to; some were even Brahmins. Mughal art, by far the best documented in India, gives us a glimpse of traditional patronage, if we allow the fact that the age was already in transition. For instance, it anticipated in some ways the high status of the artist that was to be taken for granted in the colonial period. The emperor Jahangir in particular conferred highest honours on the artists he most admired. All the same, however prized these artists were, as part of the imperial entourage they had no independent existence.[24]

And yet it is an indication of an emerging secular outlook, as confirmed by the rise of portraiture, that the Mughal court also anticipated artistic individualism to some extent. For the first time we know the names of artists, although individual styles, the hallmark of individualism, are difficult to separate in Mughal collaborative paintings. Above all, the artistic themes and the flavour of a reign revolved around the emperor's personality rather than the artists. There is, however, a fascinating case of a highly developed artistic individualism. Abu'l-Fazl, the emperor Akbar's chronicler, has left us an account of the painter Daswanth whose dazzling talent and tragic life made him a legendary figure in his own time. The son of a humble palanquin bearer, his compulsive drawing habit attracted Akbar's attention, who arranged for his training. Daswanth soon reached the peak of his profession and was regarded as the foremost Mughal painter. Suffering from depression, he took his own life at an early age. What little evidence there is on this gifted artist suggests that he displayed signs of melancholia, an affliction associated with artistic genius in the West, the epitome of modern individualism. How can we explain this 'genius' in a period when the *topos* itself did not seem to exist in India? Unfortunately, we do not know enough about Daswanth to draw any firm conclusion except that he is an enigma.[25]

So even at the Mughal court, the artists as a class did not enjoy an elevated position; only individual painters were ennobled as a personal favour of the emperor. A gulf separates the low 'craftsman' artist of the

pre-colonial period and his colonial successors. The first self-conscious artists belong to the British period, the celebrated example being Ravi Varma, the first gentleman painter. His own social standing helped to elevate the colonial artist, much like artists of the Renaissance who claimed a higher status in keeping with their self-image as intellectuals rather than craftsmen. What we are witnessing here is a new phenomenon in India, a process which Europe had already passed through: the emancipation of artists from traditional aristocratic patronage, who were now sustained by public opinion in the form of art exhibitions and art journalism. In the case of India, an additional factor was that virtually all colonial artists came from the western-educated strata. The fortunes and aspirations of these groups were intimately tied to English literacy; they chose the calling of a teacher, a lawyer, a 'writer' in the Raj bureaucracy, or of an academic artist.[26]

The collapse of traditional art

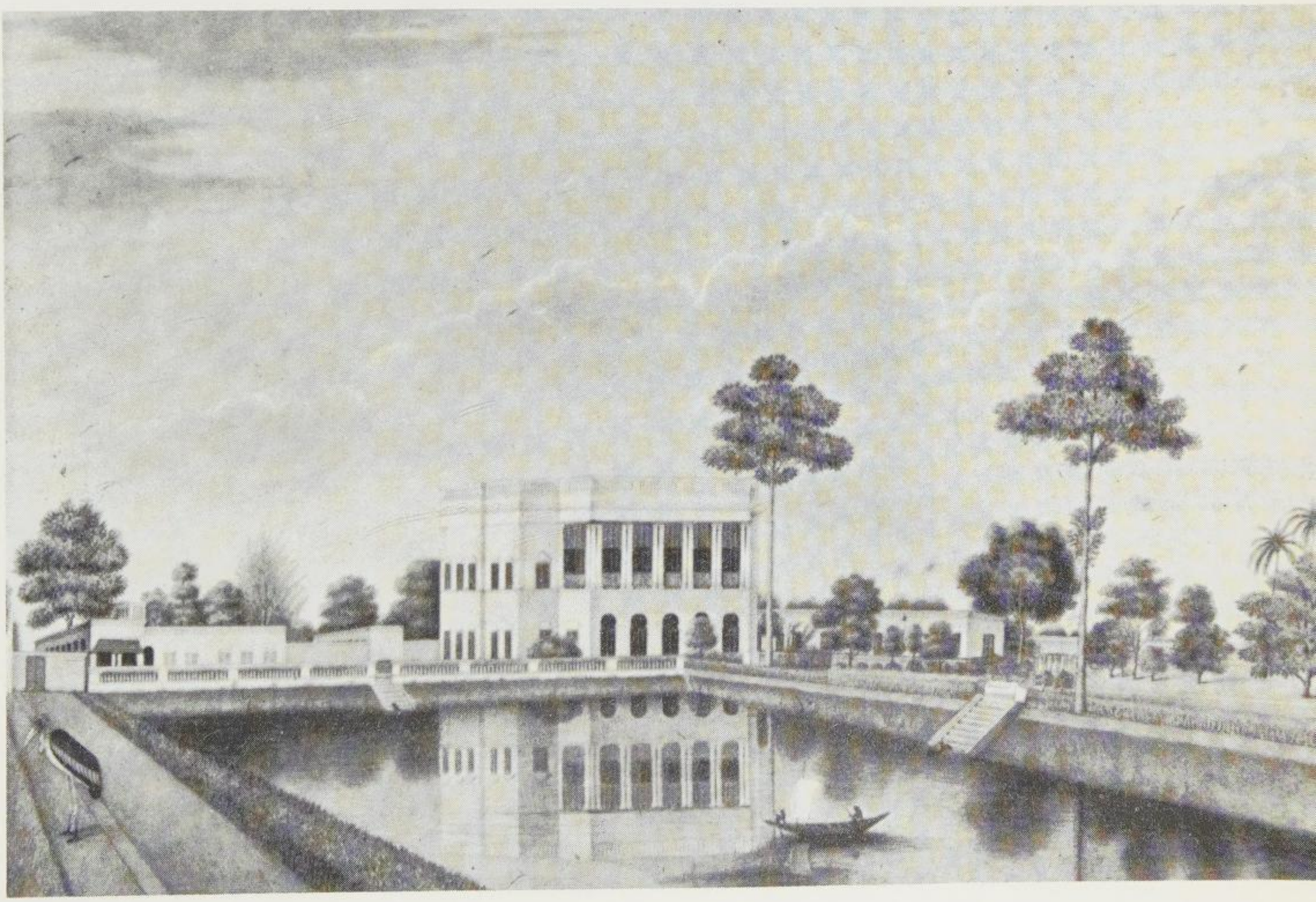
Some half a century before the rise of colonial artists, the fortunes of craftsmen-painters had begun to sink, though some of them survived till the end of the last century. Once they lost courtly patronage with the decline of Indian rulers, their days were numbered. Some sold debased bazaar paintings. Others warded off starvation by migrating to remote princely courts, away from the theatre of civil wars on the northern plains. After the East India Company gained a foothold in Bengal in 1757, its patronage temporarily halted their inexorable decline. The Company painters received instruction in European drawing. Consistent shading and single-point perspective were expected to eliminate their 'drawbacks'. Painters from Patna and Murshidabad, who flocked to Calcutta in search of work, turned out watercolours in the English manner. The Iron Duke's impetuous brother, the Marquess of Wellesley, Governor-General of India and the *vainqueur* of Tipu Sultan, acquired twenty-seven folios of natural history watercolours. The East India Company itself employed artists for documentation purposes, essential for the effective control of the new territory. The Company artists did topographical, architectural, archaeological and natural history drawings (see, for example, Fig. 3), but their best-known works are the ethnographic sets of Indian castes and professions prized by the English picturesque 'hunters'.[27]

Less direct but no less profound was the impact of the Company Raj on other artists. Although Calcutta contained a thriving mixed population since its inception in 1690, the city's new status as the capital in 1757 gave rise to the 'Indo-English' art of Kalighat. The *patuas* (traditional scroll painters) from the adjacent villages, who had no immediate commerce with the rulers, migrated to Kalighat, a thriving pilgrim centre on the outskirts of Calcutta. An ample supply of cheap, locally manufactured

paper facilitated a rapid turnout of pictures, while pictorial experience was gained from readily available English prints. The artists developed a cursive pictorial language by wielding ink with a flexible brush; their shorthand style has appealed to Léger and Matisse in our century.[28] The strength of Kalighat lay in its own peculiar adaptations of Renaissance chiaroscuro and perspective. Later, as the trade expanded, the master craftsman would provide the model which would then be duplicated and coloured in by members of his family.[29]

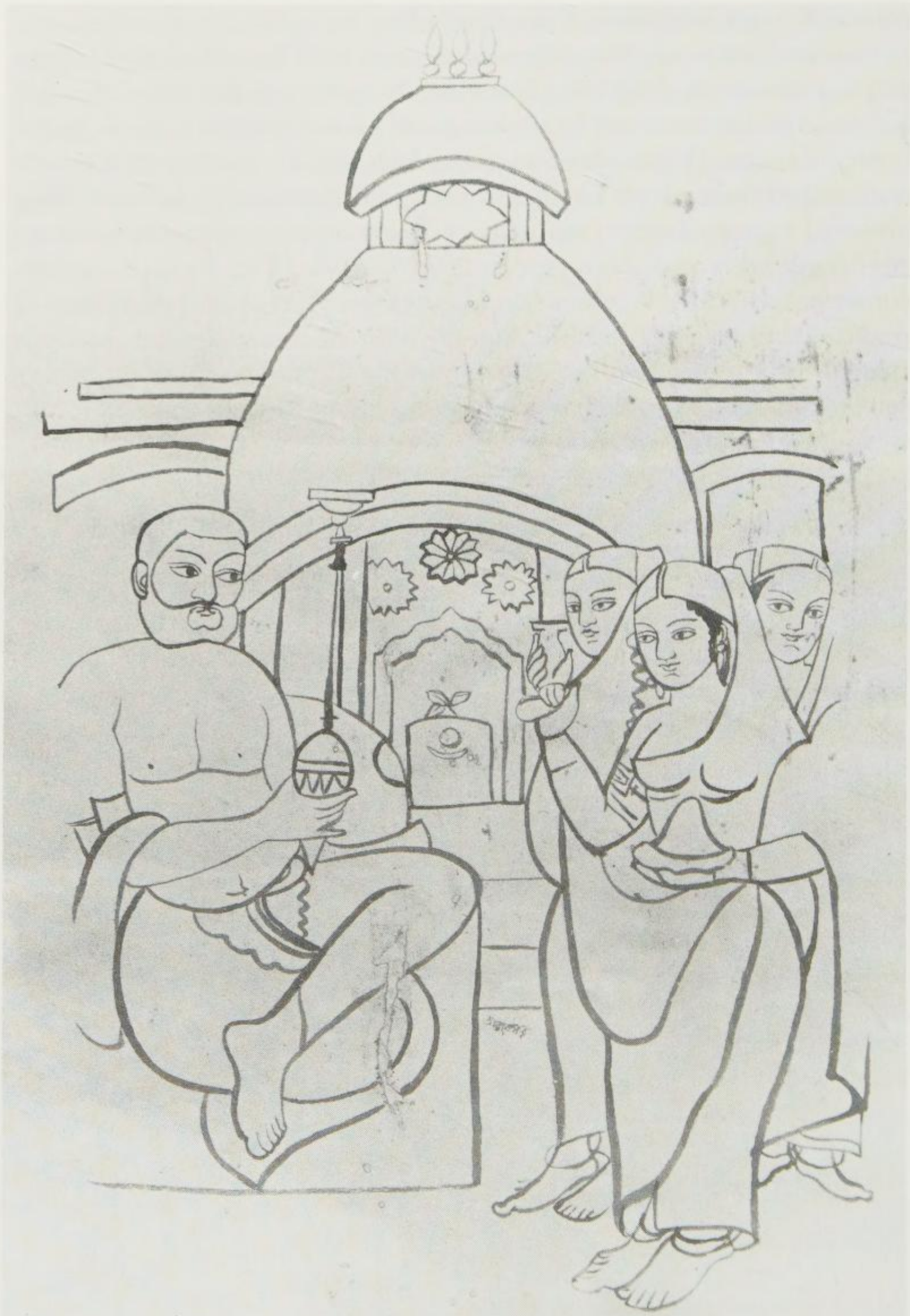
It is not hard to see why religious pictures were the initial staple of the pilgrim centre of Kalighat. Traditionally, *pats* (scrolls) were unrolled before an audience, as sacred stories would be narrated to the accompaniment of songs. The needs of an expanding secular clientele in Calcutta encouraged these artists to discard the ritual function of the *pats*. They invented a genre of social comment, choosing as their victims the *nouveaux* anglicised *babus* and their new-fangled lifestyle. The Bengali satirists, conservative like their counterparts elsewhere, greeted the breakdown of traditional order with sardonic apprehension. Sensational events such as a Bengali lady going up in a balloon and the Tarakeswar murder trial, a celebrated *crime passionnel*, did not escape their scrutiny (Fig. 4).[30]

3 Shaykh Muhammad Amir of Karraya: *House and Garden, Calcutta*, gouache. The Company painter uses the sharp outlines and tones of English watercolours and European perspective



The age of mechanical reproduction

The advent of mass prints eventually threatened the livelihood of Kalighat artists. A few took refuge in lithography. Kalighat paintings were even sent to Germany to be printed; they can be recognised by the patterned wallpapers and carpets as backgrounds. Thus the art that endured was not



4 Kalighat School preparatory line drawing: *The Mohanta of Tarakeswar and Elokeshi*, scene of meeting between the temple priest and the housewife. His seduction of Elokeshi and her subsequent murder by her husband led to the celebrated court case

Kalighat but popular prints in this 'age of mechanical reproduction', to borrow Walter Benjamin's vivid phrase. Opportunities thrown up by an expanding urban economy and the new printing processes were seized by those flexible enough to adapt their skills to these changes. The printmakers went through a rapid succession of mediums: wood engraving; lithography; oleography. They thrived as purveyors of inexpensive pictures for the ordinary people who were thus inducted into the pleasures of naturalism. Realistic prints of deities now replaced earlier sacred images.[31]

Both the printing press and engraving arrived in India in the sixteenth century though neither of them flourished until the spread of printing technology some three hundred years later. When a press was founded by the missionaries in Bengal, the new techniques were easily absorbed by local metal workers. As early as 1793 William Baillie pointed out that 'All Daniell's views [of Calcutta] were stained principally by natives'.[32] In the 1820s, D'Oyly trained Jairam Das to help run his lithography firm. The first illustrated book in Bengali, the narrative poem *Oonoodah Mongul*, came out in 1816. By 1859, the Bat-tala region was taken over by publishers and turned into a 'Grub Street' of Calcutta. Forty-six presses were in operation, producing over three hundred titles, a sign of growing literacy in Bengal. The 'penny dreadfuls' of Bat-tala, which became synonymous with coarse satire and prurience, mark the rise of an urban subculture that preferred the *argot* to the refined tongue. In this the Bengali 'chapbooks' were as close to Kalighat pictures as to the popular theatre, the *bhāns*. The engravers of Bat-tala succeeded in wresting the market in religious pictures from Kalighat. But they could not shake off its sacred iconography which still led the field. By the nineteenth century, cheap prints were freely available in most other regions of India as well.[33]

Finally, photography outstripped all other forms of mechanical reproduction in popularity. The camera, which was a logical solution to the problems of mimesis, had opened up a whole new world to western academic painters. But eventually they parted company with photographic realism, leaving that aspect of representation to photographers. India was strikingly different from Europe in this. No such naturalistic convention existed on the subcontinent. Indians discovered photography in the 1840s soon after they took to naturalist art. Whereas in the West, photography took away the livelihood of painters, the very opposite happened in India. It was oil portraitists who posed a threat to photographers in the last century.[34]

The rise of oil painting

It was not just oil portraits, but oil painting itself, that was the most important contribution of western art to colonial India. Taught at art schools, it transformed Indian art in terms of scale, style and sub-

ject-matter. Its appeal was more limited than that of popular prints since it could only be afforded by the affluent. Oil portraiture as a lucrative profession emerged in the late eighteenth century, long before the advent of art schools. That was when Indian taste for naturalism was being moulded, as increasingly European artists usurped the position hitherto enjoyed by Mughal and Rajput painters. Hearing of the Company's

5 Lithograph: *Sarasvati*, the Hindu goddess of learning by K. H. Doss from S. M. Tagore, *Six Principal Ragas* (1877)

military successes, English artists turned to India to seek their fortunes there. At this time in England, the average artist fared poorly in competition with Italian artists. From painting portraits of the Company officials the visiting artists made their way into the princely courts. Occasionally the Company officials interceded with local rulers on their behalf. The Governor-General Warren Hastings arranged for John Zoffany's introduction to the Nawab of Oudh.[35]

Initially, oils might not have appealed to the Indian rulers, nurtured as they were on Mughal and Rajput miniatures. But it made sense to decorate rooms with European art to impress the overlords that had succeeded the 'Grand Mogul'. Shuja-ud Daulah of Oudh preferred Indian miniatures to European art; but as a dependent ally of the British he surrounded himself not only with European advisers but with European objects as well. He sent for Tilly Kettle in 1771, who was followed by Ozias Humphrey, John Zoffany, Charles Smith and Francesco Rinaldi. Kettle and George Willison found employment with the Nawab of Arcot, another British dependent.[36]

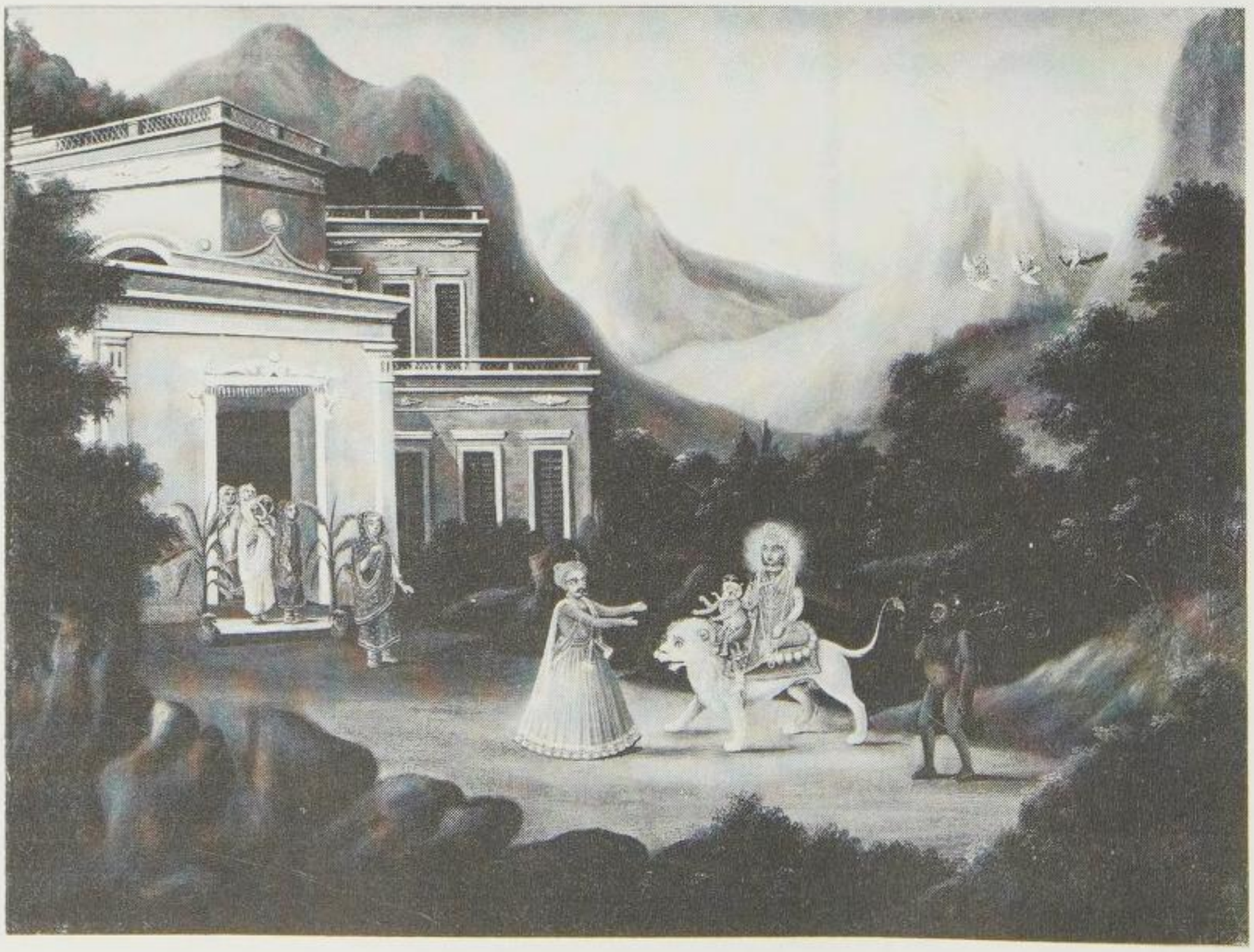
The steady stream of European painters was reduced to a trickle in Theodore Jensen's time, the last of the itinerant artists, if we leave out Valentine Prinsep, the official painter of the Durbar in 1877. Of Danish origin, Jensen was an exception rather than the rule in the mid-nineteenth century. He was soon replaced by Ravi Varma. The fashion for oil portraits spread from the landed nobility to the rising elite of Calcutta and Bombay. Initially, as for instance when George Chinnery (in India: 1802–25) visited Calcutta, the nobility refused to have their likenesses taken for fear of 'a premature death'.[37] But soon, not only the leading Parsis of Bombay and the *abhijāt* (aristocratic) bhadralok of Calcutta who also employed European artists, but the affluent in general became the economic mainstay of Indian oil painters.

The pre-art-school oil painters have not received the scholarly attention that is usually lavished on Company painters. Therefore, when one speaks of oil painters in India before the 1860s, one usually means the visiting Europeans. From this a time lag of several decades between the end of the Company style and the rise of the art-school-trained oil painters is assumed. Surprisingly, in the intervening period a mixed style of oil painting flourished all over India that bridged the seeming gap between Company watercolours and later academic oils (see Figs 6 and I). As noted by Mildred Archer, the process began much earlier:

> artists in Oudh and later in Murshidabad quickly took the opportunity of copying the work of visiting British artists. In the process they absorbed western conventions of perspective and naturalistic shading and of figures seen frontally and in relaxed poses. Some of the artists even went so far as to paint in oils, copying European pictures which had reached the collections of local Indian princes.[38]

The trend set by these painters was taken up by others in the course of the nineteenth century, creating a distinct style of indigenous oil painting. Initially the competition from visiting Europeans, whose portraits had already filled the princely courts, seemed insuperable. But Indian artists in many parts of India, including the remarkable Hansaji Raghunath in Baroda and Ramaswamy Naidu in Travancore, soon carved a niche for themselves with an 'adapted' western mode. When art exhibitions became the vogue they took part in them, though these shows mainly benefited the art-school-trained painters of a later generation. And yet it is often from exhibition notices that we know of the existence of early painters such as Gangadhar Dey, whose works are otherwise difficult to trace. Dey was a pupil of an English painter, Thomas Roods, but he also worked with the German Sunkel and the Italian Geonelli, before starting on his own as a portraitist and restorer.[39]

These 'traditional' oil paintings were not noticed until recently because their relatively flat colours and frequent reversions to conventional iconography linked them more directly to indigenous watercolours than to European academic art (Fig. 7). Nor were these artisan works valued as art. Innumerable examples nonetheless exist, particularly those produced at 'native' courts. In the late eighteenth century, the Company watercolourists had created a hard-edged shaded style, combining single point perspective with the clean lines of the Daniells; the Madras and Tanjore painters quickly switched to the Company idiom and then moved on to oils. A notable exponent of the Tanjore style was



6 Oil from Bengal: *The Goddess Durgā*. Some of them, as here, blend traditional iconography with naturalist European landscape showing distant horizon

Alagiri Naidu, a Travancore court artist. The sombre works of his successor, Ramaswamy Naidu, which are simply the oil versions of Tanjore paintings, clearly fall into this category. Similar 'translations' of traditional paintings into oils are found in Mysore. In Bengal the oil painters, like their Kalighat counterparts, used a linear style with light shading to give contour to the figures; on occasions they directly transferred Kalighat and other water-based paintings to oils (Figs 8 and 11). Indeed, Kalighat, Chitpur lithographers and oil painters shared a common iconography.[40]

7 Oil from Bengal: *Śiva and Pārvatī*. Traditional gouache transferred to oil retains its flatness

A taste for European lifestyle

More than painting or sculpture, architecture was the fulcrum of the colonial regime. Even today the visible symbols of former British glory are the Neoclassical mansions dotted all over the subcontinent. Mir Jafar, made the puppet governor of Bengal in 1757, 'gave concrete proof of his appreciation by ordering from the European architects plans

8 Chitpur lithograph based on Kalighat iconography: *Woman Putting on Earrings* (compare colour Fig. II)

for his own residence at Murshidabad'.[41] Completed in the 1830s on the model of the Government House in Calcutta, this grand palace on the river Ganges came to be known as the 'House of a Thousand Doors'. It was followed within two decades by grand 'Indo-Saracenic' edifices of the maharajas, many of them planned and built by East India Company engineers.[42]

These capacious palaces could at last house vast collections of European art, mostly nineteenth-century originals but also copies of old masters. The leading princes, whose social precedence was fixed by the Raj with the number of 'gun salutes', embarked on lavish expenditure on European art. Baroda had the finest collection. In the 1890s, the highly cultivated prince, Sayaji Rao III Gaekwad (reigned 1875–1939), engaged the Venetian artist A. Felici to adorn the massive Laxmi Vilas Palace with oils, bronzes and marbles. He continued to add to his collection during his European travels. In 1910 he relied on the expertise of Marion Spielmann, the editor of *The Connoisseur*, to form an impressive collection of western art. Responding to the call of nationalism, Baroda, like Mysore, was also to acquire works of modern Indian painters.[43]

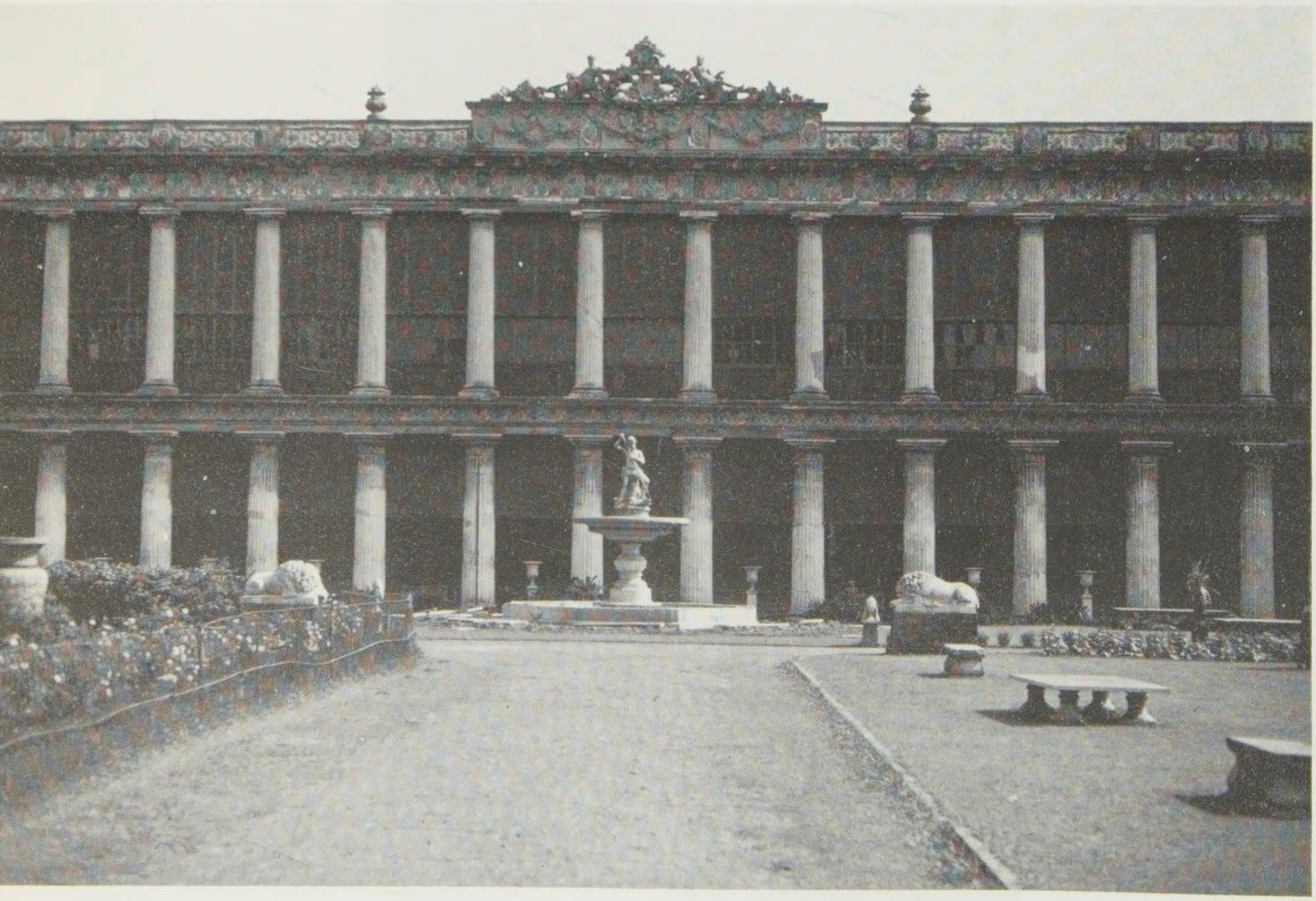
The collecting mania of the princes is brought to life by a very late and unexpected example from rural Maharastra. Sri Bhavani Museum, built virtually in the middle of nowhere, was the brainchild of the ruler of Aundh, an amateur artist. Designed by an Italian architect in 1938 as a spacious villa, the museum perches on top of a steep hill, dominating the surrounding countryside. The galleries which allowed natural light through large glass-covered ceilings were ahead of their time. They contain a rich assortment of European antiques in copies, sculptures, paintings of old masters and a very substantial collection of contemporary Indian art. Founded to improve the taste of Bala Saheb's subjects, such a large museum of European art at the height of the nationalist movement seemed to be delightfully oblivious to the writing on the wall.[44]

As early as the late eighteenth century, the westernised lesser nobility decided not to lag behind in prodigal spending. Among minor aristocrats, the collection of Salar Jung, a leading figure at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad, has acquired a unique reputation for its bizarre quality. At the lower end of the social scale were the mansions of the merchant princes and zamindars who had made their fortunes under the East India Company. As with the Nawabs, they may have originally collected for social acceptance by the English. But slowly these objects transformed their taste. The Tagores of Calcutta, the family of the great poet Rabindranath, were avid collectors. Perhaps no building conveys more vividly the extravagant lifestyle of the aristocratic bhadralok (gentleman in Bengali, the western-educated elite of Bengal) than the Marble Palace, the grand Palladian villa in Calcutta (Figs 9, 10).

Founded by a merchant prince, Rajendro Mallik, in 1835, it houses a mélange of European and Far Eastern art objects: copies of ancient Greek sculptures and works of Houdon, Canova and Thorvaldsen; an assortment of academic painters and copies of old masters; Tang, Han and Ming vases; Chippendale[?] mirrors.[45]

While Maharajas, Nawabs and leading families built galleries to indulge their taste in European art, the average English-educated hung prints in their living rooms. Even the poor had their cheap Kalighat paintings to decorate their walls. In this period, the fashion in hanging pictures originated in princely courts. The Mughals did not put up miniatures on their walls but kept them in beautiful albums, while wall paintings were confined to public buildings. The only room decoration that one notices in paintings from the period are glass bottles placed in alcoves in the walls.[46]

The steady accumulation of European objects in colonial cities could not but transform the taste of the elite. This brief overview of the changing artistic priorities in early colonial India is a backdrop to the 1850s, the period when public taste began to be moulded in a programmatic manner by the Raj. If the initial taste for European art among



9 The Marble Palace, a Palladian mansion in nineteenth-century Calcutta

affluent Indians was more a matter of convenience, by the time the art schools were founded that taste had turned thoroughly western and solidly Victorian. The paintings which contemporary novelists and critics describe in loving detail could only have been realised with the powers of Renaissance naturalism.[47]

10 Nineteenth-century European sculpture from the Marble Palace

PART TWO
THE AGE OF OPTIMISM

2 ART EDUCATION AND RAJ PATRONAGE (1850–1900)

> None can have a stronger claim on our attention than . . . Education. It is one of our sacred duties to be the means . . . of conferring upon the natives of India those vast moral and material blessings which flow from the general diffusion of useful knowledge, and which India may, under Providence, derive from her connection with England.
>
> Education Despatch of the East India Company, 19 July 1854

Unlike the leisurely pace of earlier westernisation, in the 1850s, the introduction of academic art, as part of an ambitious plan to convert the intelligentsia, was written into the imperial policy. 'The Age of Optimism', the title of this section, evokes both this confidence about altering Indian sensibility and the enthusiastic reception of naturalist art among the western-educated. That optimism mirrors the age in which progress had become an emblem of British hegemony. Of the manifold channels of westernisation, art schools, indirectly controlled by departments of public instruction, emerged as uniquely powerful institutions.

The reasons behind this self-assurance are not far to seek. The art schools appeared at a time when the Raj was moving towards a modern form of benevolent despotism. In 1877 the process culminated in the consecration of Victoria as the Empress of India. Although confident westernisation had received a setback during the Uprising of 1857, the Raj continued to feel a moral obligation to bring the blessings of European progress to the colonies. This urge led to its intervention in art, assuming the task of guiding 'native' taste. Its anxiety reflected the Victorian faith in the ability of the state to inculcate good taste through legislation.

When the East India Company announced on 19 July 1854 that art schools would confer the material and moral benefits of practical knowledge on Indian subjects, it was echoing another Victorian obsession. 'Useful' knowledge was held to improve the less fortunate members of the human race, both within Britain and without. In 1861, in 'Essays on Education', Herbert Spencer was to declare that the highest art was based

on science.[1] An unprecedented material prosperity that had attended the Industrial Revolution, the upsurge of evangelism at home and spectacular British military successes abroad – all converged in a paternalism towards British workers as well as subject nations, already foreshadowed in Lord Brougham's Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (1826). Whether to improve English artisans or Indian subjects, the motives behind art education were strikingly similar. But strange to say, the progress of art schools in India as instruments of change owed less to any clear-cut objectives than to clashing ideologies that periodically threatened the very existence of these schools. Part of the problem was that the government failed to recognise the profound shifts in the class composition of artists in India; the new western-educated, 'gentlemen artists' spelt the end of artisans.[2]

The changes were not all social; art schools changed the whole concept of art in India. English art teaching differed radically from traditional Indian apprenticeship. Not only was an art school's approach more formal than the relationship between the master and his apprentice, there were also striking differences between European and Indian artistic processes. These are best described as the distinction between a conceptual mode of art, followed by Indian artists since antiquity, and the western perceptual one, which constantly corrects the initial formula by means of observation. Traditional Indian painting, for instance, takes as its starting point an outline drawing or a stencil, which is then coloured in without any significant modification. A western painting or drawing, on the other hand, attempts to build up a three-dimensional version of the subject by constantly modifying the initial schema. One cannot overemphasise the transformation of artistic thinking in India which this new, tentative approach brought about.[3]

ART SCHOOLS IN COLONIAL CITIES

The first 'western' art school was founded by the British Resident, Sir Charles Malet, in the Peshwa's domain at Pune (Poona) in c. 1798, to enable local painters to assist visiting British artists. Run by James Wales (1747–95), the school closed after his sudden death.[4] His pupil Gangaram Tambat's sketches embellished Malet's archaeological works on Ellora. In the 1830s the idea of a mechanics' institute was floated by Englishmen in Calcutta, who had noticed its rise in Britain. Possibly the earliest institution of this kind was the Calcutta Lyceum, which sought to encourage arts and sciences among the Bengalis with lectures, exhibitions and an art school. In the nineteenth century, such ideas cropped up regularly.[5]

The first proper art school was the Calcutta Mechanics' Institution and School of Arts, founded by Frederick Corbyn after a public meeting on

26 February 1839. Having benefited from Indian resources, the British felt duty-bound to introduce the arts of civilised life to the land. The school, expected to safeguard the morals of the youth and foster 'manliness' in them, modelled itself on the British institutions that sought 'to wean [artisans] from improper habits, to make them moral and open doors of knowledge'. In India, the need was all the greater, he thought, because of the students' aversion to manual work; a scientific study of art would also instil reasoning habits in them.[6]

In Madras, the first art school opened in 1850. Dr Alexander Hunter, the resident surgeon, ran it at his own expense, with the object of improving native taste through 'the humanising culture of the fine arts'. The following year, he opened a school of industry to produce better domestic articles, 'largely made in this country, but rudely and uncouthly'. Hunter's two schools, which combined profit with 'beauty', soon came together. A grant-in-aid was offered in 1852 for purchasing casts, models and 'studies', so optimistic did the government feel about its commercial prospects.[7]

The art school in Bombay was the gift of Jamsethji Jijibhai, a Parsi industrialist. On the selection committee for the Great Exhibition of 1851, the success of Indian art wares in London led Jijibhai to offer funds for an art school. He was also persuaded by the local press, which urged him to give a lead in the improvement of Indian taste. Although Jijibhai included painting among the subjects, he envisaged an institution 'for the improvement of arts and manufactures [and] the habits of industry of the middle and lower classes'. The Great Exhibition had demonstrated Indian 'ingenuity, albeit often erroneously directed'. Under proper guidance, 'the people of India would attain a degree of proficiency in painting and sculpture which would lead to an extended taste for such objects . . . [and] would enable India once more to take up an advanced position among manufacturing countries of the world'.[8] The cautious East India Company took up the offer after consulting Hunter, by now the accepted pioneer in the field. The School opened in 1856 and drawing lessons were started the year after.[9]

In Calcutta, following the short-lived art school of 1839, a permanent one was founded in 1854 by the Society for the Promotion of Industrial Art. It was solemnly announced that the school was 'to develop inventiveness and originality, to supply skilled draughtsmen, designers [and] engravers, to meet increasing demand, to provide employment, to promote taste and refinement in the application of Art, among the upper classes [and] to supply the community with works of art at a moderate price'.[10] The school took in ninety-five students with funds from the wealthy residents of the city. In February 1855 it held an exhibition of student works, the first public show of its kind in India.[11] These efforts at improving 'native' taste went together with introducing western techniques.

THE GREAT EXHIBITION OF 1851 AND INDIAN ARTISANS

These schools were privately founded, but they did not long remain in individual hands. The departments of public instruction, set up in the three presidencies in 1855, took control of the Calcutta art school in 1858 and Bombay in 1864. Madras had enjoyed a government subsidy since 1852. After the assumption of government control, these schools became a vehicle for disseminating European taste, as part of the grand design of bringing progress to the colonies. Nor did the East India Company forget that the scientific scrutiny of nature was a sacred act. In this period, the connection between science and morality was uppermost in the minds of educationists, as seen in the statement of Dr F. De Fabeck, Principal of the Jaipur art school:

> By combining scientific and intellectual progress with proficiency in manual skill [the art schools] are much more calculated . . . to raise the social and moral conditions of the natives of this country than institutions which only regard intellectual acquirements and refinements . . . where much of the intellectual element is supplied by the governing race, and so much of the labouring element [is] needed from the dependent one, it surely seems desirable to secure . . . every means that may give to the latter all the normal proficiency of which they are capable.[12]

No one was more eager to put these ideas into practice than the high official Sir Richard Temple. An amateur painter, he emerged as a leading figure in Indian art education, who took a personal pleasure in its advances. While Indian design was 'not scientifically directed, [it] is yet, in genius, in perception, and in sentiment, peculiarly their own . . . The exceeding merit is due to heredity among the most beautiful possessions of the human race'.[13] While he yielded to no one in his admiration for the Indian 'imitative' faculty, he was confident that the Bombay art school could

> teach them one thing, which through all the preceding ages they have never learnt, namely drawing objects correctly, whether figures, landscape or architecture. Such drawing tends to rectify some of their mental faults, to intensify their powers of observation, and to make them understand analytically those glories of nature which they love so well.[14]

It is no coincidence that Temple mentioned in the same breath the role of moral training in native education, a statement that linked nature, science and morality, that heady mixture of progress and evangelism prescribed for the colonies. Temple's confidence in the moral lessons of art reflects a sentiment expressed pithily by Ruskin: '[the Indian] will not draw a form of nature but an amalgamation of monstrous objects'; and pronounced tersely by Sir George Birdwood: 'painting and sculpture as fine arts did not exist in India'.[15]

But the British themselves were divided over art teaching; it was either the 'fine arts' as imparted by the Royal Academy or the 'applied' arts as taught at the Department of Science and Art at South Kensington. When the Raj sought advice on art schools, its choice was dictated by developments in Britain. A crisis in art education had followed in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. The whole system of teaching was in turmoil, with a rift emerging between literate artists reared in academies and the growing army of 'confused' craftsmen. In response to the perceived decline in industrial arts, mechanics' institutes were founded to impart 'useful knowledge' to artisans. Even the Royal Academy, that august arbiter of national taste, arranged art lectures for artisans, so serious did it consider the situation. Schools of design were set up following the Select Committee recommendations of 1835. The problem seemed most acute during the Great Exhibition of 1851. While the marvels of science won public admiration, a dissenting band of critics denounced the prevailing industrial design as devoid of taste and coherence.[16]

These distant rumbles were heard in the choice of art schools for India. To the Victorians the crisis of taste was clear from the proliferation of 'illusionist' design. Henry Cole and the new reformers who detested it praised Indian art wares at the Great Exhibition, which 'correctly' applied flat, abstract decoration. The Central School of Industrial Art at South Kensington, founded in 1857, sought to impart the knowledge of 'correct' design by eliminating illusionist motifs altogether. For Cole, who directed the school, the Indian decorative arts were his ideal.[17]

For advice the Indian government turned to this institution as it faced the problem of preserving Indian handicrafts. From the 1850s, Henry Cole, Owen Jones, William Morris, George Birdwood, each one in his own way a defender of Indian manufactures, accused the Raj of presiding over their destruction. The reasons for the decline, not just of the applied arts of India, but of all non-industrial communities, were complex and embedded within the history of modern industrialism. The seriousness of the crisis was recognised by critics. The causes, however, were ill-understood at the time and the debate surrounding it is not settled even today. Mass-produced goods such as Manchester textiles, destined for the Indian market, dealt a mortal blow to the aesthetically refined but uncompetitive products of India. The economic decline faced by Indian artisans was irrevocable since it was bound up with the whole economic fabric of the empire. So the question of reversing the process did not arise. All that could be done was to stem the rate of decline.[18]

It is not certain how clearly the government saw the artisan crisis as economic rather than technological. Trevelyan's submission to the House of Lords on 21 June 1853 does acknowledge some government responsibility. All the same, when the Raj was stung into action by the criticisms of the anti-illusionist designers, it chose to 'plug the leak' by art education. The official policy, enshrined in the Trevelyan report, decided to offer the

blessings of practical art to the 'backward' artisans of India. It drew an analogy between the decline of artisans in Britain and India. In Britain, Queen Victoria was keen to spread 'fine art and practical science' among artisans through South Kensington. In India, European drawing would ease the entry of the artisan into the twentieth century. It fell to the rulers to assist him in this.[19]

The government simply failed or did not wish to see that the situations in India and Britain were different, reiterating Victorian confidence in the superiority of European technical knowledge in the sphere of art. Yet Trevelyan was forced to make some conciliatory gestures towards the radical critics:

> I would also establish a college for instruction in art . . . [for] the natives have great capacities for art. They have a memorable delicacy of touch; they have great accuracy of eye; and their power of imitation is quite extraordinary. The extent to which they are capable of successfully cultivating the decorative and fine arts has been shown by the results of the recent Exhibition in London.[20]

But this did not deflect him from pursuing a western-biased art policy.

FRAMING THE SYLLABUS

The uniform art policy in India was not only based on South Kensington precepts; that institution was also the recruiting ground for teachers. The best-known among them, Henry Hover Locke, John Lockwood Kipling, John Griffiths and the most celebrated of them all, Ernest Binfield Havell, were trained there. A close network is further suggested in that Locke, Kipling and Griffiths were at the school together, and the last two remained lifelong friends. Even Joseph Crowe, a relative outsider, was made to take a course at the School of Design before joining.[21]

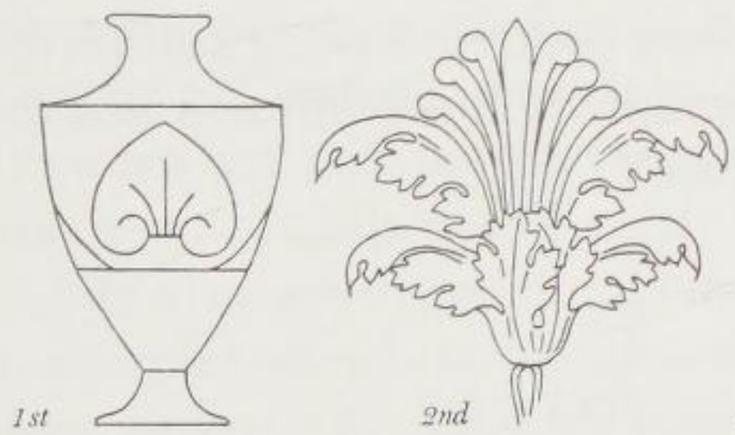
The South Kensington curriculum devised by Cole's associate, Richard Redgrave, for art schools in Britain had far-reaching consequences for colonial art in India (Fig. 11). Its preoccupation with 'scientific' drawing provided the framework for Indian artists. Graded instructions in four types of drawing were devised: freehand, memory, geometrical and drawing from models. Of twenty-three stages of the course, ten in drawing were followed by a two-stage, painting course for those who reached higher levels. The elementary course taught two types of line drawing: perspective and architectural drawing with geometrical instruments; freehand drawing of flat shapes, of ornaments from books and objects in the round. Then followed an advanced course in shaded drawing, graduating from copying illustrations to actual objects. At the figure-drawing stage, students went from flat shapes to time sketching and memory drawing. Anatomy lessons were given, but antique casts

were preferred to the nude, which was left until the very end and if possible avoided.[22] The drawing course made students adept at copying ornaments accurately.

Since the government had accepted that the primary aim of the schools was to train artisans and not to create academic artists, what did the artisan need? His unerring sense of design was not in question; he had little to learn from his European counterpart in matters of taste. All he lacked was scientific drawing, based on the observation of natural forms. If the European artisan's shortcoming was a surfeit of nature, the Indian suffered from an excess of art. In Britain, not only did the state prefer schools of design to academies, but these schools themselves opted for a scientific rather than an aesthetic approach. A textbook of 1893 reaffirmed the scientific ideal in elementary art teaching: clear view, exact measurement, precise statement.[23]

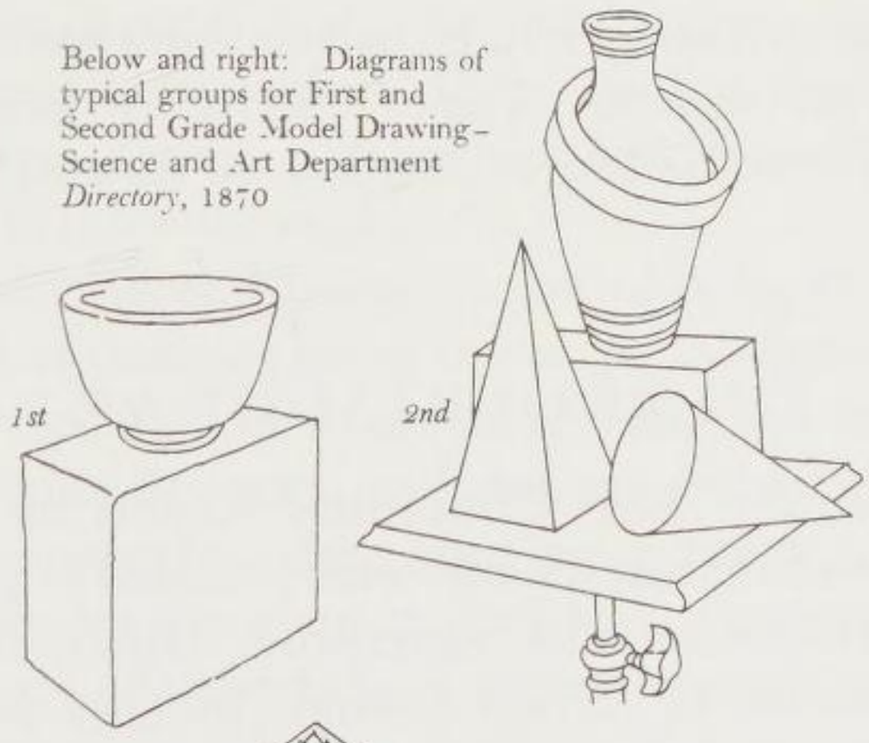
Redgrave's syllabus simply codified a scientific bias that went back to William Dyce and Heath Wilson, two pioneer reformers of English schools of design. When Dyce was asked to re-fashion them, he had two precedents before him, the French and the German. The two nations had responded to the industrial age differently. French artisans were exposed to art and encouraged to draw the human figure in order to improve their taste. The Germans, keen on accurate design, excluded the fine arts from their training programme. Dyce's preference for the German model represents the Victorian elevation of science to a high moral plane. Emulating the *Gewerbeschule*, he banished the life class from the schools of design.[24]

There were ideological reasons behind Dyce's choice. As he put it in his



Above: Typical examples for copying for First and Second Grade Freehand Drawing from the Flat – Science and Art Department *Directory*, 1875

Below and right: Diagrams of typical groups for First and Second Grade Model Drawing – Science and Art Department *Directory*, 1870



Cyclamen within circle

Celandine within triangle

Datura within pentagon

Left: Specimens of type of work required for Stage 22b of the Course of Instruction, *Ornamental arrangement to fill a given space*

11 Art Examination: Science and Art Department, South Kensington

Drawing Book (1842–3) for the schools of design, the decorative and the fine arts had entirely different functions. The former extracted beauty from nature, while the latter imitated nature's beauty. Those who defended life classes for artisans were dismissed as being in error, an assertion that flew in the face of the student demand.[25] The real reason why Dyce excluded nude study from decoration was because 'moral expression, historical and poetical subjects' belonged to the domain of art, rather than to decoration, which had been of a lower order since the Renaissance. Reinforcing Dyce's separation of intellectual and manual skills, Wilson extolled the virtue of repetitive drawing to control the hand, of mastering the art of copying, initially with a compass and ruler, then, having gained experience, graduating to freehand drawing. The geometry here is not the Classical 'golden section', which glorified the human form, but the geometry of mechanical engineers. The process culminated in Redgrave's syllabus, whose obsession with copying prevented 'Schools of Art from showing any enterprise'.[26]

Of course European teachers in India could invoke the authority of Reynolds who sanctioned that a 'degree of mechanical practice, odd as it may seem, must precede theory. The reason is, that if we wait till we are partly able to comprehend the theory of art, too much of life will be past to permit us to acquire facility and power'.[27] In 1843 this was enshrined in a book on perspective. The boisterous atmosphere of French *ateliers* and their liberal teaching methods never found their way into India. Artists were sober upright subjects of the empire whose highest aspiration was to join the artistic establishment. Rewarded with official kudos, the successful ones were to form the docile cadres of the imperial art bureaucracy. The paternalist notion that high art may corrupt artisans was exported to India, along with graded examinations and prizes for excellence in mechanical exercises. Strict control was maintained against truancy and idleness for the student's own good. Before he was promoted to the next stage of instruction, he had to furnish written proof of having completed the previous one. The practice was in keeping with the sentiment that the Raj was the moral guardian of its subjects.[28]

THE PROGRESS OF ART SCHOOLS

From the Select Committee Report of 1853, it would be reasonable to assume that art schools were founded to promote Indian industrial arts as a 'semi-commercial' enterprise. However, what seems straightforward could not be carried through. Initially the exclusion of the fine arts was a precondition of teaching. In actual practice there was a lack of resolve to leave them out of the training programme. From the outset the schools were indecisive as to whether they were to train artisans or artists. Of course, this ambivalence was not the monopoly of departments of

education but part of the mentality of the period. Hunter's two institutions, one for art and the other for industry, had ambitions of 'humanising' Indian sensibility as well as making a profit with art wares.[29] Jijibhai wished to improve the applied arts, rather than create 'a school of imaginative painters and sculptors', and yet he recommended painting as a main subject for his school. Since these two men wished both to improve art manufactures and to encourage a taste for European art, they saddled themselves with two incompatible objectives even before the schools came into existence.[30]

The art school in Madras was run by Hunter from 1850 to 1872; it remained craft oriented as late as the 1920s, closely linked as it was to local industries. Arguably, its relative stagnation until the 1920s can be attributed to this. Workshops produced tiles, bricks and terracotta ornaments, making them the chief suppliers to local industries and the government. Subjects on offer included woodwork, metalwork and jewellery. In due course, lessons in wood and copperplate engraving were added. Students were assisted by the local *mistris* (artisans). Since no qualification was required beyond the ability to follow instructions, sons of artisans enrolled in numbers. Hunter also opened a pottery department which taught English manufacturing methods.[31]

Madras was the first to try to enforce the art education policy. Heath Wilson's motto that unlike the exact imitation of historical patterns originality of design was pernicious, was enforced in carpet-weaving and other areas. In the design class, students copied South Indian motifs, for which the teachers ransacked local temples. Yet, modelling in the round, an essential feature of European naturalism but not of Indian art, was encouraged as 'essential for the successful working out of designs in applied work, especially valuable to those who will be skilled workmen and designers'.[32] But even with the school's industrial bias the problems of marrying fine and applied arts proved insuperable. Because naturalist drawing was deemed essential for decoration, the art department offered courses for artisans as well as for draughtsmen, with ensuing rivalries between 'art' and 'industry' departments. In fact, the moment two schools amalgamated, clashes of ideals became inevitable.[33]

Life class produced the dilemma faced by English art schools. As the authorities sensed the likelihood of students being drawn to the fine arts, they placed obstacles in their path. Only advanced students were grudgingly allowed to attend figure drawing, and that too only if their ability was vouched for by the superintendent. But before they were allowed within the precincts of the art department, they had to undergo a period of 'ordeal' by lacquerwork. As the School prospectus solemnly admonished, no word was more abused than 'artist'; students were advised to study strictly for professional purposes. A frivolous wish to draw was not sufficient reason to join the art class.[34]

In these schools, the change in working methods and taste from Indian

to western came with the introduction of 'solid' drawing based on nature. The early years saw the spread of South Kensington precepts – freehand and geometrical drawing, copious use of the blackboard, drawing from casts and 'progressive series of Grecian ornaments', copying old masters and sketching from nature – all these were meant to improve student taste. Standard textbooks by Chapman, Harding and others used in England were introduced. In 1859–60 the courses offered by the art department in Madras in elementary and advanced drawing had the unintended effect of encouraging painting and modelling.[35]

Initially, the close links with local manufacturers were considered the strength of Madras. Yet this very success came under official disapproval in 1856, when Hunter was taken to task for making the school too commercial. Complaint was also voiced about the lack of method, with Hunter being packed off to England to take lessons in graphic art.[36] By 1859–60 a question mark was raised over the future of the school so as to force it to reiterate its twin objectives of spreading useful knowledge and replacing exports with local art wares. Though threatened with the loss of the grant-in-aid, it won a reprieve in 1874, because 'bearing in mind the circumstances, results were not so disappointing'. But Robert Chisholm, the head of the school and a leading architect, felt that it had wasted public funds without gaining local respect. He favoured its abolition or turning it into 'a drawing academy'. Reminding the investigating committee of the Raj policy of spreading western art, he asserted that the discouragement of everyone except artisans had been counter-productive. An art gallery, in his view, gave a more effective publicity to western art.[37]

Jijibhai expected the art school to form local taste; the first appointee, the British artist James Payton, was to instil the love of European art in the students. Jijibhai's own preference was markedly western with a touch of eclecticism gained from trade contacts. Payton took charge of forty-nine pupils at the makeshift premises of the Elphinstone High School; the other two English teachers were Joseph Crowe and George Wilkins Terry. Fees were initially waived to encourage artisans, though a knowledge of elementary geometry and arithmetic was required. This practice, taken from British art schools, effectively kept out artisans, thus ensuring the failure of the government objective. From 1858 fees were regularly charged for Terry's wood-engraving class.[38]

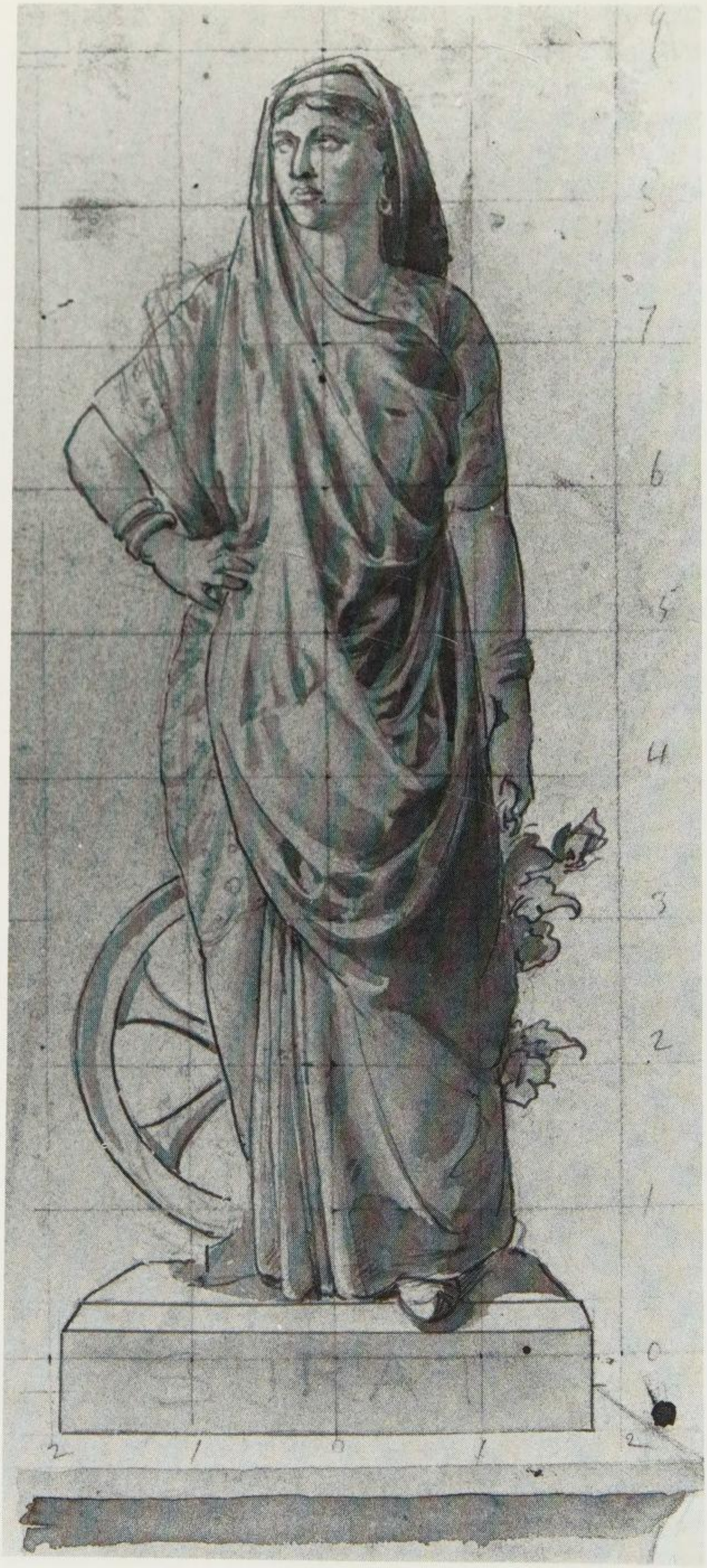
Bombay's failure to recruit artisans paved the way for boys from elite families. The choice of Joseph Crowe, a Paris-trained painter, as the head of Bombay, could only have reinforced the fine arts. Arguably the most distinguished figure among the teachers, Crowe had a firm grounding not only in academic art but in the history of the Renaissance as well. One wonders if he would have created an advanced academic tradition in India, had he stayed on. Brought up in France and trained in Delaroche's studio, the largest in Paris, Crowe is remembered today as a collaborator of the Italian critic and historian, G. B. Cavalcaselle.[39]

While Crowe was promising, he was also the least committed of the early teachers, treating his exile in 'provincial' Bombay as a stepping-stone to his future career as a man of letters. After covering the Crimean War as a journalist, Crowe was out of a job, when he heard of a vacancy in the 'school of design' in Bombay. His family connections with Palmerston ensured his selection, but he had first to qualify in freehand and geometrical drawing as demanded by the Department of Practical Art. On reaching Bombay he found that the Directors had chosen Wilkins Terry as head but he persuaded them to change their mind by accepting a modest salary. In the unsettled conditions of 1857, exacerbated by ill health, Crowe lasted a year.[40] In Bombay he taught orthographic projection, geometrical and figure drawing at the school, and gave private watercolour lessons in his spare time. His wide experience of academic art scarcely rubbed off on the students. For his part, his mind was made up; 'as far as I have yet seen, our native students have much subtlety of eye and finger, and will make excellent copyists'.[41]

Crowe accepted the commonplace that decoration was an Indian preserve, even though he was impressed with the craftsmen's grasp of the human form. Nor did he wish to foist European forms upon his students. But since they were 'deficient' in rudimentary techniques, taste and finish, the only remedy for them was to bring them face to face with nature, that would provide fresh ideas and prevent stagnation. He gave his verdict on Indian sculpture:

> the grotesque images which libel the shapes of men and animals in all parts of a Hindoo temple, are irredeemably bad. Their sculptured foliage is purely abstract in character . . . It seems the safest way of attempting to regenerate this effete artificial manner of design, without destroying what it has inherited of genuine indigenous merit . . . is to set the student to copy faithfully the objects of nature . . . Thus a school of design would in time arise, native in the best sense, owing its accuracy, truth and natural beauty to European inspiration, but moulding its material into purely Indian types.[42]

The search for artisans continued. By 1860 students began spending the whole day at the school. In 1865 Lockwood Kipling and John Griffiths arrived from South Kensington to take charge of decorative sculpture and painting respectively (Figs 12, 13). Since these two men were also very active in the cultural life of colonial India it may be useful to outline their careers here. Father of Rudyard, John Lockwood Kipling (1837–1911), who began as a designer and modeller at a Staffordshire pottery factory, subsequently decorated the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. A lively illustrator and sketcher, Kipling recorded Indian life and culture with sympathy and humour, which ideally complemented his son's Indian tales. Relief sculpture on public buildings flourished in Bombay during his period at the school. J. H. Rivett-Carnac, a close friend,



12 J. L. Kipling: Draped figure for the art school, Bombay, wash and ink drawing

13 J. L. Kipling: *A Hindu Jat*. Decorative design produced in Lahore, wash and ink

picturesquely described 'the wigwams in which they [the Kiplings] then lived and carried on work before the school was built'. He noted, however, that they were 'better informed on all matters Indian – religion, customs, particularities – than many officials who had long been in the country'.[43] In 1880, Kipling joined The Mayo School of Art in Lahore. The *Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, founded by him in 1886, championed Indian crafts, a concern that matured into an interest in ancient Indian sculpture as keeper of the Lahore museum, the 'Wonder House' celebrated in *Kim*.[44]

The Welshman John Griffiths (1838–1918), teacher of decorative painting, has been called 'the only Victorian painter to have lived and worked in India', his painting style compared with that of Watts, Poynter and Alma-Tadema. Griffiths, a contemporary of Kipling at South Kensington, had joined him in the decoration of the Victoria and Albert Museum. They remained close friends and Griffiths was Rudyard's godfather. In his painting, Griffiths recorded the richness and vivid colours of India and Indians. A regular contributor to the Royal Academy from 1869, his major achievement was a comprehensive survey of the Ajanta frescoes in 1896.[45]

Between 1858–60, Bombay's foundation course emulated that of the British Council of Education, which recommended training the eye and the hand to 'understand and represent with firmness and refinement, first abstract and geometrical shapes, and then the varied hundred forms of nature, passing through the intermediate stage of architectural ornament'. Figure drawing proved attractive to students but was restricted to advanced ones. Bombay was unique in putting architectural design on the syllabus, the only school which served in urban planning. In 1867–8, the teaching stages were clearly demarcated, which now included ornamental, geometrical and perspective drawing, in addition to shaded drawing of foliage and the figure. Antique casts were introduced, while wood engraving, decorative sculpture and painting were commenced under Kipling and Griffiths. The teachers confirmed that students corrected 'hereditary art' by copying nature. Ominously, familiar complaints are also heard about the lack of a clear purpose – was the school a commercial or educational venture?[46]

Books prescribed for South Kensington were imported and Heath Wilson's admonitions heeded: 'The classes were first set to draw lines, straight and curved, from flat examples by the teacher on the blackboard and afterwards proceeded to copy the complicated flat ornaments of Mr Dyce and Mr Herman'.[47] An early student, Mahadev V. Dhurandhar, describes the first day at the school. After admission, the student came to class carrying a drawing board, a shading box and drawing paper. He was to be taught the importance of tones with simple plaster cubes, cylinders and spheres which were placed against a white screen. The learner began with freehand drawing, which was subsequently shaded by him to bring

out the different tones of three aspects of natural light: incidental, reflected and diffused. The exercise took several days to complete. With a written approval of the Vice-Principal that he has mastered simple tones, he proceeded to higher stages, namely, time drawing or shading of foliage and antique casts. The early students, who often employed sepia tones, show remarkable uniformity. The drawings of prominent academic artists – Pestonji Bomanji, Manchershaw Pithawalla, Abalal Rahiman and Dhurandhar – bear imprints of English art teaching as imparted by Griffiths (Figs 14, 15). After this formative period, the only major addition to teaching methods was the introduction of regular examinations by Edwin Greenwood in the 1890s.[48]

The teachers helped the pupils to grasp forms in the round, while trying not to violate the spirit of the syllabus with its emphasis on flat design (Figs 16, 17). But Wilkins Terry, credited with reviving Sind pottery, declared in 1871 that 'Knowledge of figure, very thorough, was the basis of higher art, decorative and otherwise. For it brings Indian designers face to face with nature. Their tendency is to repeat traditional composition . . . without glancing at real life. Hence they degenerate instead of improving'.[49] Terry was an influential teacher, whose local reputation led the Bombay public to call the art school, 'Terry School'.

If Terry helped weaken South Kensington anti-naturalism, he was justified because the government policy had set itself the mutually incompatible tasks of preserving the excellence of Indian decoration and yet improving it with the techniques of western naturalism. This bred confusion among teachers: while students were expected to adhere to South Kensington precepts, they were then expected to improve the same flat designs by learning to reproduce them three-dimensionally. The exercise was self-defeating, because one had to choose between flat or illusionist treatment but not both at once. In short, nothing was more calculated to destroy the precepts of Cole and Redgrave than this vacillation. But to be fair to them, this ambivalence raises a more general problem of artistic choice that is not confined to Indian art: once one moves towards a mimetic representation of objects in natural light one is forced to sacrifice some of the formal clarity and pure colour arrangements, the strength of non-representational art. In any case, by the 1880s the foundation course for artisans was fast turning into a preparation for painting and sculpture, the two most sought-after subjects. This was given formal recognition in 1873 when the offending word 'industry' was removed from the school's title: 'Sir Jamsethji Jijibhai School of Art and Industry'.[50]

In Calcutta the fine arts were cultivated with a singular passion. In 1864, Redgrave despatched Henry Locke to the city at the request of the DPI of Bengal. Though trained in South Kensington and engaged to 'modernise' Indian applied arts, Locke had his own ideas about the future of the school. He was helped by the fact that before his arrival the school report

14 J. Griffiths: *Fisherwoman*, 1872, watercolour sketch

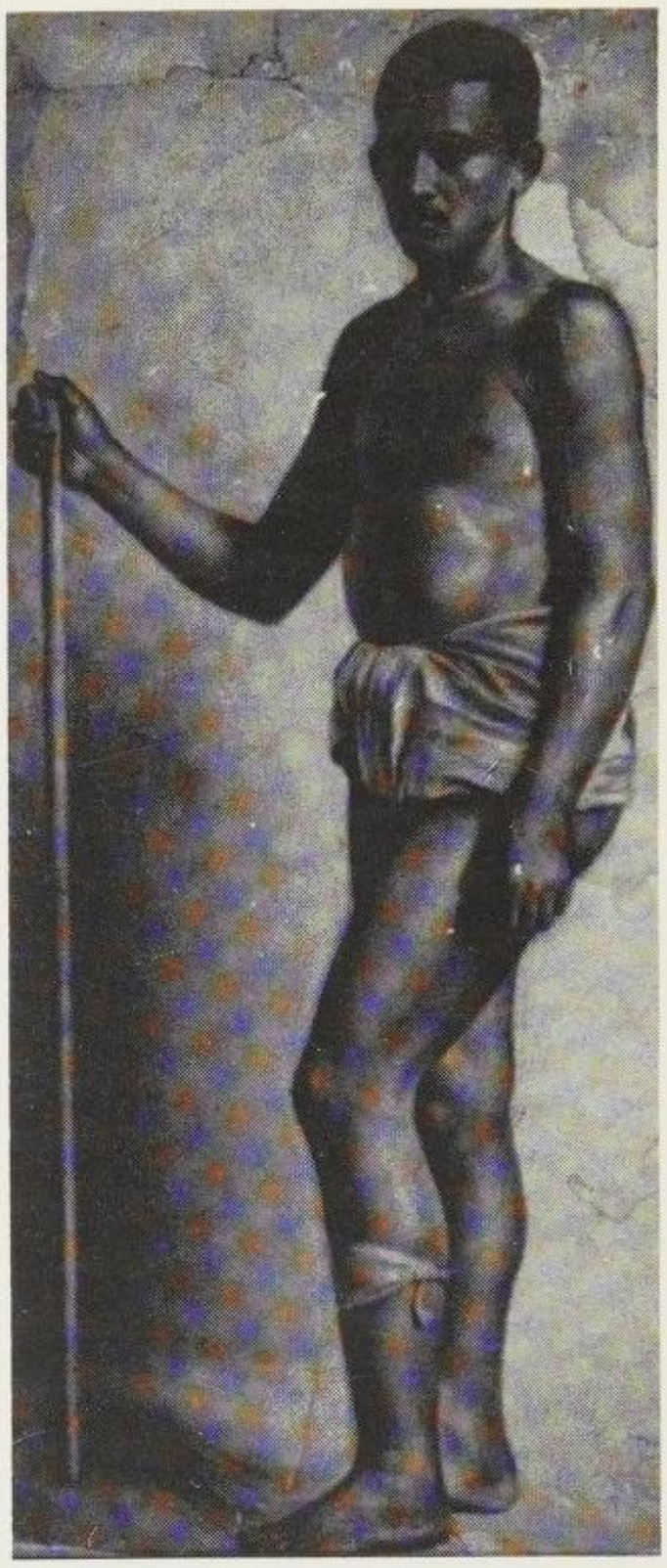
had voiced the need to train students who had made excellent progress in oil painting. Locke set about transforming the school into an academy where 'high art' instincts were to be nurtured at the expense of the useful ones; he did more, addressing the intelligentsia in Bengal on the importance of art education. Until the patron himself had a discriminating taste, he contended, the efforts of artists were in vain.[51]

Locke took advantage of Redgrave's art course, paraphrasing its carefully graded stages in order to impose coherence and unity on the

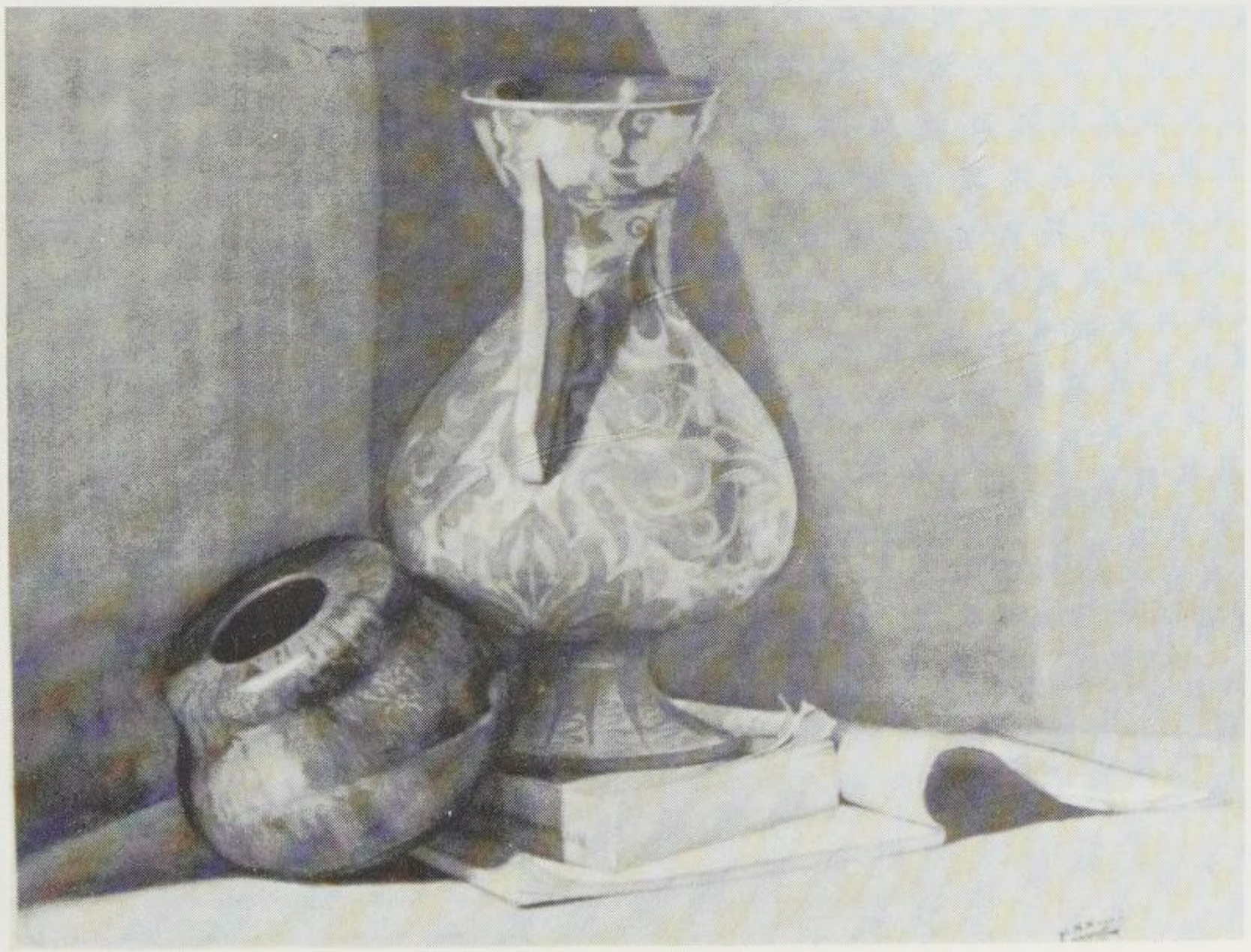
15 M. V. Dhurandhar: *Bombay Fisherwoman*, 1899, watercolour sketch inspired by Griffiths (Fig. 14)

school. Its drawing system was more faithfully followed than in other schools, commencing with the least complicated, namely elementary linear drawing, gradually moving to freehand, shaded freehand and geometrical drawing. Where Locke broke with the government aims was in offering specialisation in the visual arts: elementary painting, modelling and design, technical design, lithography, wood engraving and photography. Once again, the principle behind this was to make students adept at representation, to advance from line to the solid object and then on to nature. Each stage – higher freehand drawing, for instance – contained three subsidiary steps, such as the outline drawing of flat images, solid objects and natural forms. Each stage was a preparation for the next and a simplified version of the English model, with emphasis on accurate line drawing, rather than on the free and fluid sketches of French schools.[52] Locke's plans drew Sir Richard Temple's approbation: 'The Calcutta School is for Fine Art and Design alone'.[53] At the school, only second in popularity to portraiture was book illustration, the rise of which was closely associated with printing technology. As the report of 1885–6 commented, 'a decorative painter [was] not held in high esteem among Indians, and [was] considered little better than a common mechanic'.[54]

Of aspects of South Kensington teaching, none affected Bengali artists more than its strictures on 'accurate drawing'. No one denies for a moment that any artistic achievement demands a proper training of the eye and the hand. But at the same time there is the need for a balance between skill and creativity. The obsession with the 'accuracy' of



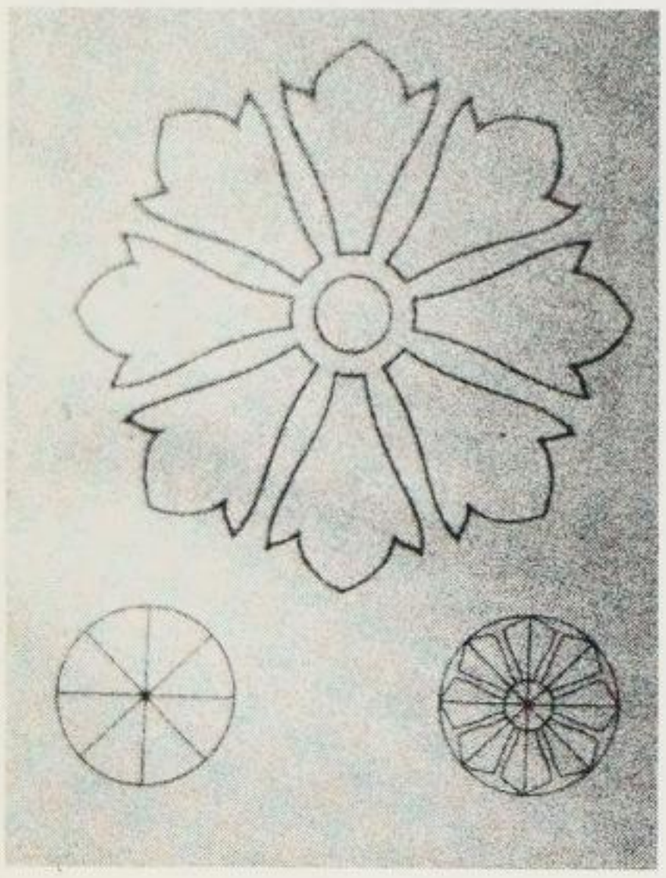
17 M. V. Dhurandhar: *Life Study*, chalk drawing



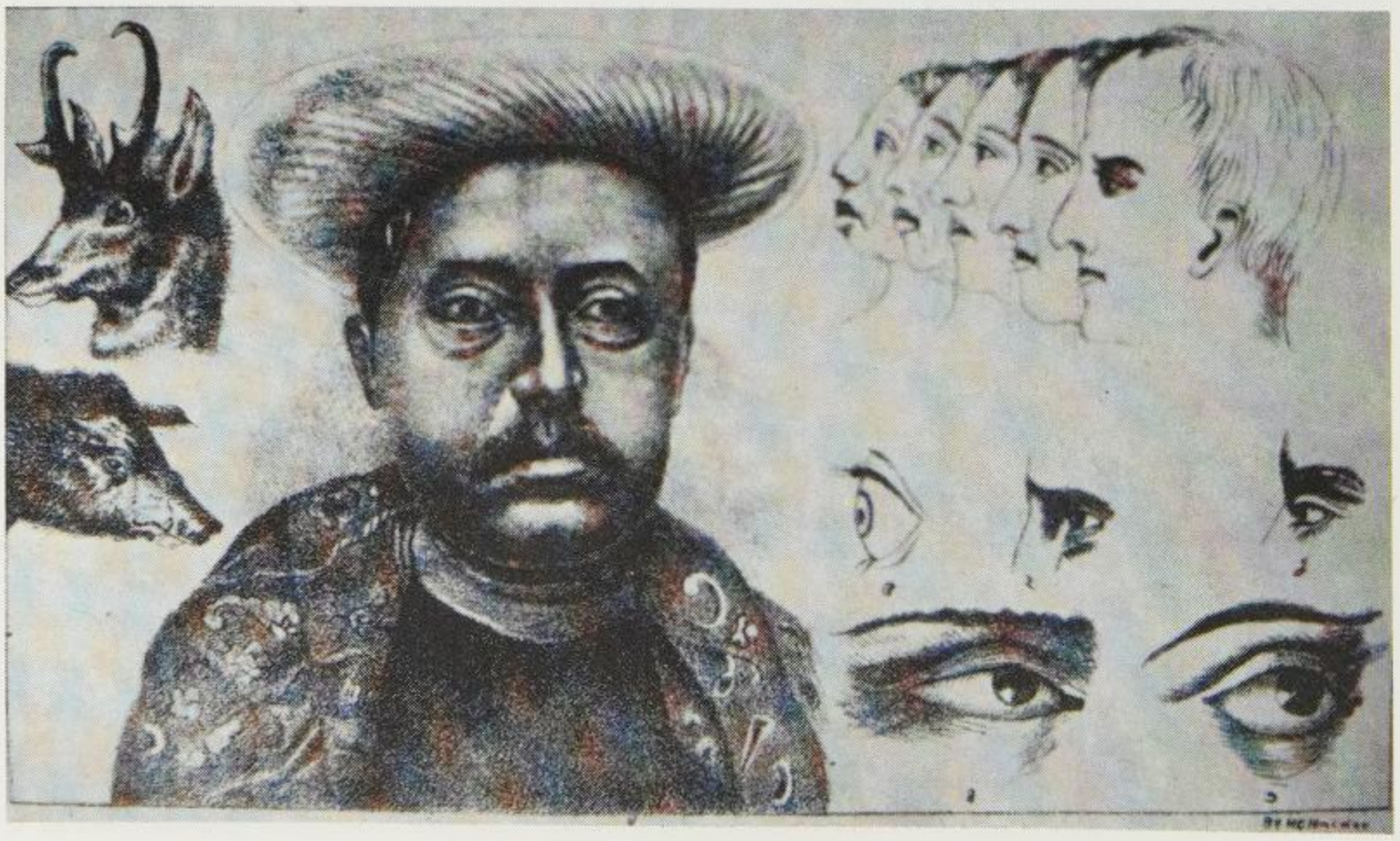
16 Bombay art student: *Still Life*, watercolour showing the study of light and shadow

imitation to the neglect of imagination was a limitation of colonial art teaching, as was the insistence on drawing as a branch of geometry – far better to emulate humbly the given pattern than to break out into adventurous originality. This became ingrained in artistic consciousness as the only worthwhile pursuit, an idea carried to the high schools by art teachers. Respectable ladies imbibed it through private tutors. It was a keynote in early nationalist writings on art, surviving with amazing persistence as late as 1908. While accepting this drawback of South Kensington, it would be unfair not to acknowledge its positive contribution as well. Owen Jones' belief in geometry as 'the basis of all form' had made him appreciate non-illusionist designs of India.[55]

The earliest Bengali article on drawing was by an art graduate. The opening number of *Shilpa Pushpānjali* (1886) (Fig. 18), the first art journal in India, contained lessons in elementary drawing and shading, with utmost emphasis on line and geometrical shapes – ovals, tetrafoils and quadrifoils. The student progressed from pencil to conté and finally to coal (more readily available in Bengal than charcoal). As the eye must guide the hand, so the mind must learn to observe the significant outlines of objects. The novice was to commence with the straight line and test his skill by copying. For the unskilled, symmetrical form was the safest to start with, as it could be duplicated with ease. He was exhorted to use as many actual objects as possible so that he could rectify his own mistakes. The writer's favourite was the leaf, because of its symmetry and simplicity. In Harish Chandra Haldar's 'diagrams of expression', we detect a more imaginative approach that went beyond mechanical practice. This art graduate's essay appeared in *Bālak* (Fig. 19), an early children's magazine in Bengal. But all in all, the two Victorian favourites, drawing as a science and mechanical skill as a precondition of excellence,



18 A page of pencil drawing from *Shilpa Pushpānjali*



19 H. Haldar: *Drawing Lesson*, pencil sketches from *Bālak*

became an inalienable part of the Indian artist's armoury. The imitative drawing imposed on the English schools by Dyce, Wilson and Redgrave did not receive its *coup de grâce* until the 1930s, when English teachers became convinced of the superiority of creative work.[56]

THE ACCOUTREMENTS OF ART INSTRUCTION

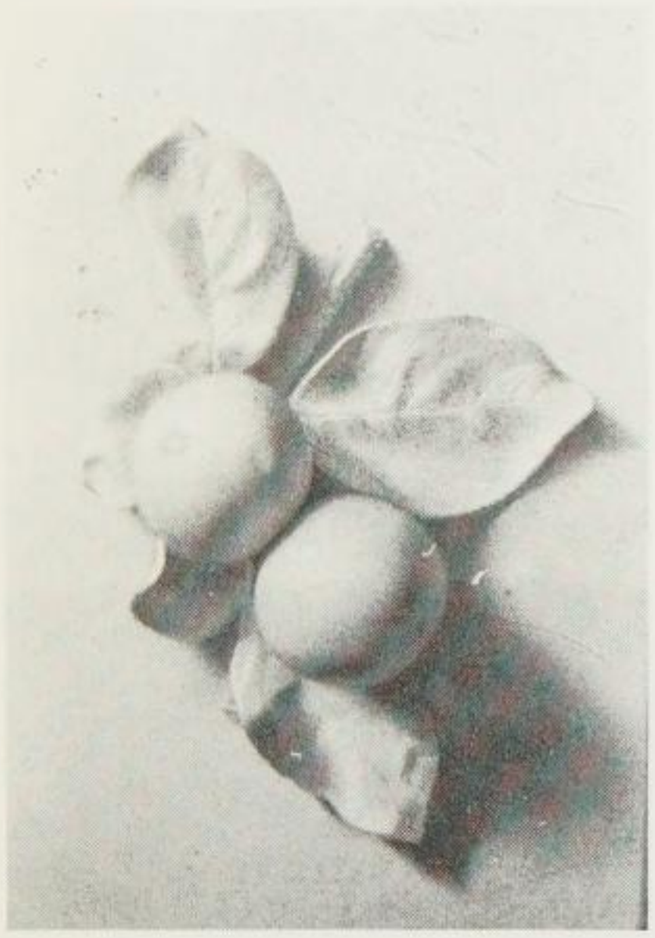
Following developments in South Kensington, Locke's successor, W. H. Jobbins, further tightened up the curriculum in 1887 with stringent examinations. Still-life painting was introduced at the school which continued the move towards fine arts. Meanwhile in Britain, Cole introduced drawing in high schools to prepare students before they came up to art schools. Both Locke and Griffiths followed him in this, an ideal move that opened up teaching jobs for art graduates. The scheme did not, however, come into force for another decade.[57]

Other measures hastened the transformation of art schools into academies. The first was the systematic importation of teaching devices, current since the Renaissance but mass-produced in the last century. Plaster casts of the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, the *Torso Belvedere* and other antiques met the growing demand in British art schools (Fig. 20). Hunter in Madras and Locke in Calcutta were the first to introduce antiques in

20 Shaded student drawing from the antique, Bombay art school

drawing classes. Wilkins Terry, the outspoken devotee of academic art, returned from Britain with a huge consignment of casts, which still crowd a classroom in the Bombay art school. Jobbins also used exemplars – English students' prize drawings – for teaching (Fig. 21). In Britain, prize drawings were circulated in art schools to prepare for national examinations and competitions.[58]

21 Prize drawing by an English art student used in Calcutta



Heath Wilson brought art galleries into teaching but in India they were also meant to form public taste. In Madras, the gallery of the Fine Art Society was made available to the art school. It contained works of the British and the Indians who exhibited there, though copies of old masters belonged to it as well. In 1881, the school acquired its own gallery.[59] As early as 1848, a museum of Indian manufactures was envisaged for Bombay, formed with duplicates of objects sent to the 1851 exhibition. Opened in 1857 with donations from local notables, its curator George Birdwood was to become a great authority on Indian industrial arts. In 1868 it moved to a Palladian building and was named the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 22). Objects from the Calcutta industrial exhibition of 1883–4 were added to its collection, but it mainly served as a showcase for the art wares of local students.[60]

22 Pottery by a student displayed at the museum of the industrial art, Bombay (then known as the Victoria and Albert Museum)

No museum could, however, vie in prestige with the gallery of European art in Calcutta, the imperial capital. Built in 1874, the triumphalist period of the Raj, it was a grand gesture towards the Indian subjects. Conceived by the art-loving Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, and by Temple, now a member of his council, its ambition was to make western culture available to the youth of Bengal.[61] In 1881 the art school in Bombay set up a gallery on its premises with an annual grant and gifts from the Governor and wealthy people. Used for teaching, the gallery contained a hotch-potch of objects – Mulready figures jostling with Topham sketches, Raphael cartoons, Sistine frescoes and sundry Renaissance reproductions competing with two hundred plaster casts of antiques, and Japanese watercolours sharing space with photographs of Indian antiquities. There were also some genuine Mughal paintings, though how much they were appreciated is not known.[62]

CRISIS IN THE ART SCHOOLS

The Raj, having invested in art schools, was keen to bring their progress to public notice. The art committee for the Calcutta exhibition of 1883, dominated by heads of art schools, stressed the role of museums and art journals in encouraging the applied arts. *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, edited by Kipling, had become a serious forum for the Indian crafts. The committee also insisted that the schools were 'imperial necessities' partly to counter criticisms against Madras. It presented itself as the protector of artisans, whose works were now preserved in

museums. We may note that student works were sent along with artisanal products to exhibitions overseas to demonstrate the improvement of Indian arts with modern techniques. The greatest success story of imperial art policy was the decoration of the Durbar Room at Osborne, Queen Victoria's residence on the Isle of Wight, by Bhai Ram Singh, trained at the Mayo School of Art, Lahore, by Kipling (Fig. 23). For this period, the most publicised industrial show was the 'international exhibition' in Calcutta in 1883–4. Student works, which formed an overwhelming section, were so arranged as to make the triumph of art teaching self-evident.[63]

The organisers of the exhibition were pleased with the success of art schools but in Britain as early as 1877 they were seen as a disaster. Plans were afoot for their reform under the leading Victorian painter, Poynter; since China and Japan had 'prostituted' themselves, the only original decoration left in the world was Indian.[64] How successful was the Raj as a patron of the arts? Not only does this issue figure prominently in recent writings, a doom-laden atmosphere pervades the early history of these schools. But before judging their actual progress, we should beware of taking the official complaints at their face value. A crisis in artistic taste, a persistent theme in Victorian Britain, spilled over into Indian affairs. Whether there was in reality a crisis or not, we have come to rely for its authenticity on the Victorians who agonised over the problem.[65]

The initial uncertainties about the desirability of fine versus decorative

23 Bhai Ram Singh: decoration of the Durbar Room at Osborne on the Isle of Wight by a student of J. L. Kipling

art deepened in the 1890s. A sense of crisis, such as in 1893, forced contradictory and half-hearted measures, calling into question the very *raison d'être* of these schools. Since they were government-funded, their progress dominated official discussions. The Secretary of State for India recommended the withdrawal of subsidies for 'there is a general consent that they serve no really useful purpose, while the considerable expenditure on them from the Imperial revenues, is, in my opinion, unjustifiable'. As there was a dearth of competent European teachers, and since 'decorative design could be easily taught by natives', he suggested converting them into technical schools. Recalling their original purpose, he insisted that they were now overcrowded with the offspring of the elite. As he put it dramatically, 'to a thousand of the latter there were a mere four artisans'.[66]

Threatened with redundancy, the teachers reiterated their aims of spreading western drawing based on examples of oriental art at the Decennial Art Conference in Lahore in 1894. The chairman, Colonel Hendley of the Jaipur art school, asserted that, contrary to general feeling, the schools did serve a useful purpose. Not only did they produce teachers and government draughtsmen, but more crucially, they shielded artisans from modern ideas. A resolution was passed insisting that the schools taught the 'true principles of art, especially Oriental art', though some of the teachers felt helpless against encroaching Europeanisation.[67] It is astonishing that in the same breath they proposed that western drawing was absolutely necessary, and not merely for artisans, passing a resolution that *drawing must be made compulsory in the empire*.[68] In the event, the schools won a reprieve from the Secretary of State. But controversies over the true aims of art schools raged unabated, soon entering the nationalist agenda. Nothing captures better the clash of ideals than the two lectures delivered at the Royal Society of Arts in 1909–10, the first by Cecil Burns, the Principal of Bombay, followed by E. B. Havell, late of the Calcutta art school. Burns sought to 'modernise' teaching in Bombay to improve the artisan's competitiveness, while Havell fought to retain what he viewed as traditional art.[69]

If we are to settle the question of whether the schools were a success, we have to ask what they were meant to be, and for whom they were meant. We know that official thinking was muddled on this. But this 'fine/applied art' debate concealed a fundamental clash of cultures – the desirability of the Indian vis-à-vis the western model – adding to official confusion. Those convinced of the superiority of European art were in favour of replacing Indian art altogether, be it high or decorative. Thus Hunter's task was straightforward. He saw no merit in Indian applied arts, and introduced western ideas with a view to improving their quality and competitiveness in a way not possible along 'old traditional lines'.[70] But the problem was serious for those who wished to 'improve' Indian decoration with naturalism, while accepting its intrinsic excellence.

Crowe was the first to seek to create 'a school of design . . . native in the best sense, owing its accuracy, truth and natural beauty to European inspiration, but moulding its material into purely Indian types'.[71] He was soon replaced by the more sympathetic Kipling and Griffiths, both of whom directed students towards Indian decoration. The Bombay school report (1869–70) urged the Principal to take Fergusson's advice on exploring local antiquities with students, 'so they could draw upon a more congenial store of knowledge and a purer national taste, than as now they do by ornaments for Gothic architecture of new Bombay'.[72] Locke's views were no different:

> The most debased forms of quasi-Italian, Louis Quatorze, Louis Quinze, Rococo and other inanities are the only types of decorative painting known now to men who are the heirs of a system of decorative art to which European students look with respect and admiration, and from which many of the maxims and laws of decoration which are now taught in our art schools at home are derived. This is the extent to which up to the present time the English have improved the art of the natives here.[73]

But the basic problem of creating a strong applied tradition in art schools was not solved by turning to Indian decoration alone, however sympathetic some of the early teachers may have been. Impressed with the eloquence of Birdwood with regard to Indian decoration, the authorities devised a curriculum which taught students to appreciate Indian decoration while ignoring Indian sculpture and painting. The student was expected to be schizophrenic in his response: he would learn to appreciate Indian design and apply this insight in his work. But when he needed instructions in the 'true' principles of drawing, he would turn to the West. When Birdwood, for instance, favourably contrasted Indian art wares with British products, he was careful to distinguish them from Hindu sculptures, whose iconography he despised. This artificial separation violated Indian tradition, where decoration is an integral part of sacred architecture. Even more relevant is the fact that Victorians themselves regarded ornament as essential to architecture. They certainly did not have our modern obsession with unadorned geometrical buildings.[74]

Why was such a distinction made between fine and decorative arts of India? Birdwood and Westmacott were persuaded that fine arts did not exist in India; what they implied by this was that Indian painting and sculpture never rose beyond the decorative. The reason for Birdwood's refusal to describe Indian sculpture and painting as 'fine arts' has to do with the boundaries between fine and decorative arts in the Victorian mind, the origins of which lie in the Classical tradition. High art was governed by 'decorum', while no such restraint was necessary for the decorative arts. In Classical hierarchy, the form itself was less significant than the meaning it conveyed, with figure sculpture and painting enjoying the place of honour. Birdwood was condemning not form *qua*

form but the meaning of Hindu sculptures, as is quite clear from his distaste for *Purāṇic* iconography.[75]

Seen in this light, the art teacher A. Chatterton's description of the figure sculptures in South Indian temples as examples of decorative art makes sense. As late as 1909, denying that the industrial arts had ever declined, he stated that 'a visit to some of the temples could convince anyone that the Indian artisan had not yet lost his cunning, and that, placed in a suitable environment, he [was] still capable of planning great works'.[76] The word 'cunning' was used advisedly: it was to contrast the cerebral exercises of European artists with the low skills of Indian artisans. The whole history of Indian art was subsumed under the category, 'decorative', as Indian artists were seen as artisans rather than artists in the western sense. Indian art excelled in repetitive exercises but lacked the vital features of high art: science, originality and moral quality. In short, to view Indian art as decorative was to say that it did not come up to Victorian standards. Birdwood's own admiration for Indian crafts took for granted the general inferiority of Indian art.

The Victorian hierarchy of art, we know, kept British artisans away from the human figure, the preserve of high art. Since Indian art never rose beyond the decorative, the Indian artist's entry to western art was not through the wide portals of the Royal Academy but through the 'tradesman's entrance' at South Kensington. And who better than a Victorian painter to express this with a characteristic panache? Born in India, Valentine Cameron Prinsep (1838–1904) worked under G. F. Watts in London and Gleyre in Paris. In 1877 he was chosen by Queen Victoria to record the historic Durbar that proclaimed her the Empress of India. Prinsep's picture, according to Christopher Wood, was 'enormous and dull . . .' . A versatile painter, Prinsep lacked the creativity needed to produce something original.[77]

Prinsep found the Delhi painters' manual dexterity 'most surprising [though] what they do is entirely traditional. They work from photographs and never by chance from nature'. The portrait of General Napier of Sind was 'wonderfully like, though without an atom of *chic*, or artistic rendering. I pointed out to the man certain faults and glaring ones – of perspective, and he promised to do a view of The Golden Temple without any faults'. Prinsep concludes:

> It is such a pity such wonderful dexterity should be thrown away. Some means of really educating these fellows might be hit upon. If only they could see better work, they would quickly improve. At present the talent seems hereditary . . . and all with the same mechanical capacity and admirable patience.[78]

Prinsep's advice on the improvement of art schools was eagerly solicited. While Prinsep found Delhi painting negligible, his utter contempt was reserved for the 'monstrous native portraits' by Indian oil painters. He

heartily endorsed the official view that ornamental art was all that the native was capable of, dismissing 'the feeblest drawings' produced at Jaipur art school. Official prescriptions faithfully followed this ascription of inferiority, as the Renaissance hierarchy blended effortlessly with Social Darwinism. Compared with the summit of progress attained by Victorian art, India belonged somewhere at the lower end of the scale. But these categories were not confined to the subject races. In Britain, by the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged 'an important connection between the new hierarchy of the arts and sexual categorization . . . the history of flower painting provides the necessary link between sex and status . . .'.[79] In English art schools even today, women are encouraged to opt for applied arts, rather than painting and sculpture, as being more suitable for them. Victorian classifications die hard.

The conflict between Classical taste and Hindu iconography, which fed official ambivalence, received a fresh lease of life during the 'imperial meridian', when the notion of inherent differences between the 'progressive' West and the 'unchanging' Orient was being woven into the imperial fabric. In 1885 the government called for the use of 'Oriental models in school drawing classes'. At the Lahore conference of 1894 the term 'oriental art' was freely employed with regard to teaching, as speaker after speaker echoed their anxiety about the corrupting influence of modern ideas. In Britain the Imperial Institute and Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Indian Art had just been formed to shield the artisan from 'progress'. Two ideas are significant in retrospect: the undifferentiated term 'Oriental art' which lumped together all eastern art forms irrespective of their differences, and the belief that artistic progress in the western sense was inimical to the unchanging arts of India.[80]

The cosmetic application of Indian design in a strongly naturalist programme simply made it ineffective. Yet the vagueness in the education policy had some advantages, for it gave a free rein to imaginative teachers, who were not prepared to toe the official line. It is true that they favoured naturalism; but it is no less true that they helped explore ancient Indian art, inspiring nationalists in the process. Though a westerniser, Locke encouraged his pupil Shyamacharan Srimani to write on Indian art.[81] When his students were commissioned to illustrate Rajendralala Mitra's *Antiquities of Orissa* (1869–70), he accompanied them on the tour. He saw to it that the sculptures were 'studied in every possible way, down to various scales, lithographed, etched, and modelled, in the hope that our students may become imbued with some of the exquisite taste of their forefathers in ornamental art'.[82] In Bombay, Kipling and Griffiths were intent on keeping the western element tethered.[83]

An eloquent testimony to Griffiths' own commitment to ancient art was his Ajanta project. His students were employed to make complete copies of the wall paintings between 1872–85. To be sure, Griffiths

embarked on it for no other reason than as an object lesson in Indian ornamental art. He planned an inexpensive edition to teach superior decoration while the pottery department produced vases inspired by Ajanta (Fig. III).[84] But unlike Rám Ráz or Owen Jones, he did not confine himself to the purely decorative features at Ajanta. A competent painter, Griffiths held that there was no better model than Ajanta, urging his pupils to visit the caves as an exercise in 'consciousness raising'. And yet, the implied inferiority of Indian art, drummed into the students, proved decisive. A number of them refused to copy the paintings even on pain of expulsion, claiming it to be 'child's play'.[85] Griffiths' favourite student, Pestonji Bomanji, betrayed no recollection in later life of ever having worked at Ajanta. He went on to become one of the first salon painters of India.

Although individual teachers were prepared to use Indian art in teaching, the basic situation could not change so long as its appreciation remained in limbo. The turning point did not come until E. B. Havell's arrival in Calcutta in 1896 (see ch. 7). One cannot help admiring his ability to see through the inconsistencies in official policy, mercilessly exposing its faulty logic at his 1910 lecture at the Royal Society of Arts. He argued that, during the first period, Indian art schools suffered from a logical but unfortunate policy. Indian art was treated as inferior, and educated Indians were encouraged to borrow all ideas, artistic or otherwise, from the West. Then Birdwood's flattering image of Indian applied arts created in the minds of teachers the illogical but unbridgeable gulf between the fine and the ornamental arts. While Indian design was widely used in workshops, he recalled, drawing classes relied exclusively on antique plaster casts and copies of European art.[86]

ART SCHOOLS FOR SONS OF GENTLEMEN

Had the syllabus been more self-consistent, would the Raj have had a better chance of fostering decorative art? It is unlikely in view of the silent revolution taking place in the colonial period; the new elite artists had been quietly replacing artisan-painters for some time, as part of the wider process of westernisation. The failure of the departments of public instruction can largely be ascribed to their inability to recognise this. Madras expected to attract artisans because the only qualification required was the ability to follow instructions. Even here the authorities suffered their first disappointment. Few poor Eurasians and male orphans of British soldiers took up places reserved for them. What surprises us is the inconsistency of the authorities; when non-literate, non-Brahmin Tamils began to fill the school in 1883–4, this should have pleased them. But it only led to the complaint that 'there is a noticeable lack of Brahmins [in the school] who go to elite professions . . . but if they are assured of a good

modus vivendi from decorative art, they would join [and they are needed]'.[87]

The Principal of Bombay, Cecil Burns, drew attention to the chronic shortage of artisans at the turn of the century:

> From their commencement, the schools of art failed to attract sons of working craftsmen, who were unable to perceive the advantage of a knowledge of drawing would be to them in their daily work. The classes were, therefore, attended principally by boys and young men, who had taken advantage of the literary education supplied by the government.[88]

By the 1890s, as hopes of recruiting artisans faded, admission and examination charges became the norm, as students were expected to purchase their own art materials. Only the elite could afford such luxuries. The surnames of early students also indicate the growing preponderance of the intelligentsia: Joshi, Kalyanji, Pestonji, Pandurang, Dhurandhar, Mhatre.[89]

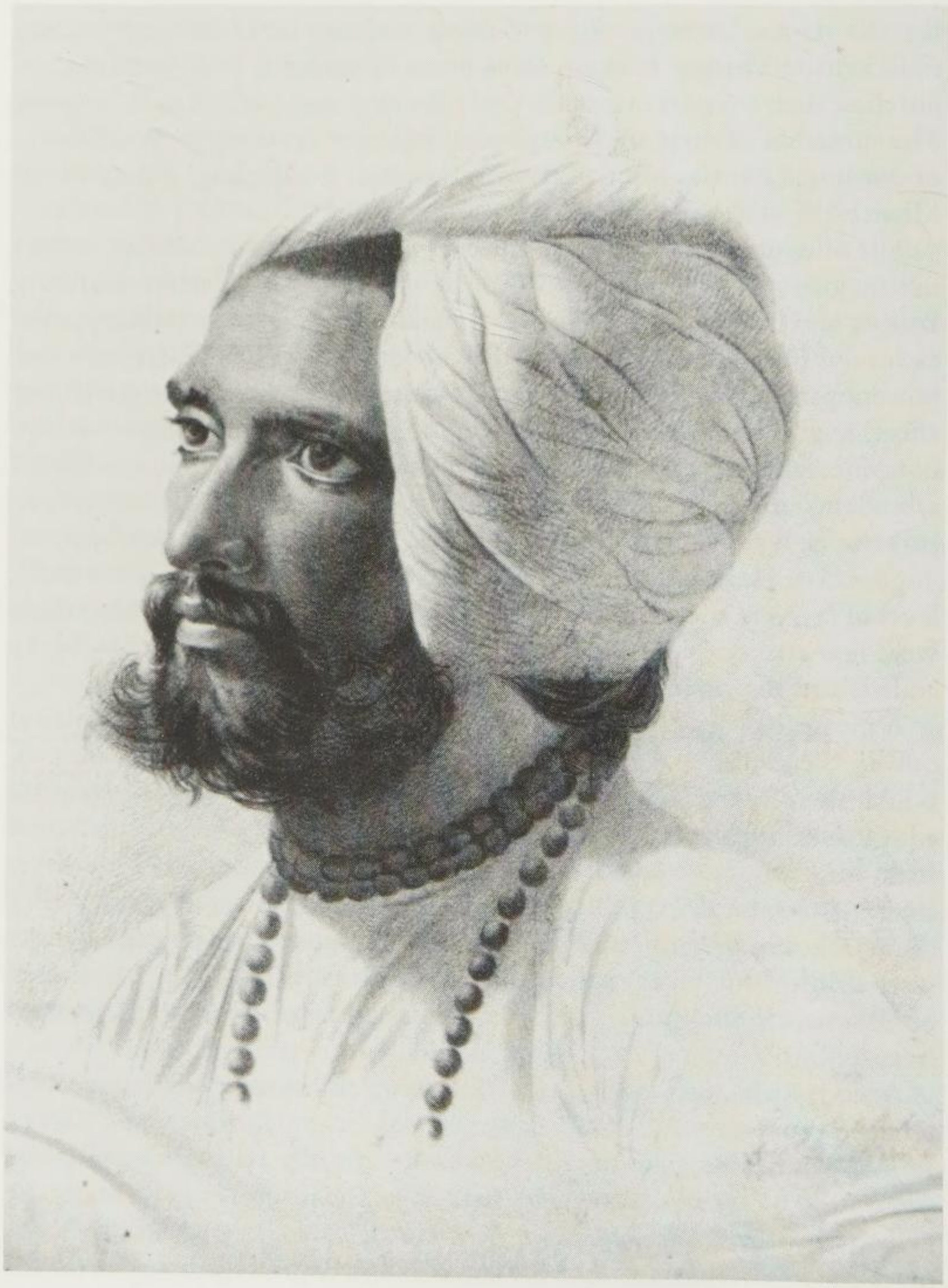
The elite dominance was even more pronounced in Calcutta, where the majority of the boys belonged to the bhadralok castes, Brahmin, Baidya and Kayastha, though some children from the hereditary artist castes did initially join. To judge by the annual report of 1862–3, a few potters (image-makers) attended occasionally, though they could not afford to give up regular work. But 'inasmuch as they make some sacrifice of immediate gain for the purpose of instruction, they may be considered as students'. By the year 1872–3, out of a total roll of ninety-four students, eighty-one were from the 'middle class', six from the 'lower class' and one 'higher class'. Locke himself campaigned to raise the status of artists to the level of lawyers and doctors. By 1883 Jobbins admitted openly that there were few artisans at the school. But drawing had spread impressively, he added, and the graphic arts were flourishing (Figs 24, 25).[90]

A measure of art schools' success would be the kind of graduates turned out by them. Here, as expected, hardly any decorative artists emerged, while there were many successful academic ones. Because English education flourished in Calcutta and Bombay, those who profited most from the new opportunities were the intelligentsia. (The third Presidency city, Madras, hardly produced artists on account of the industrial bias of the art school.) With their English, however minimal, the western-literate were able to take full advantage of the new art from the West. Nourished on Romantic literature, they were immediately drawn to Victorian story-telling canvases.[91]

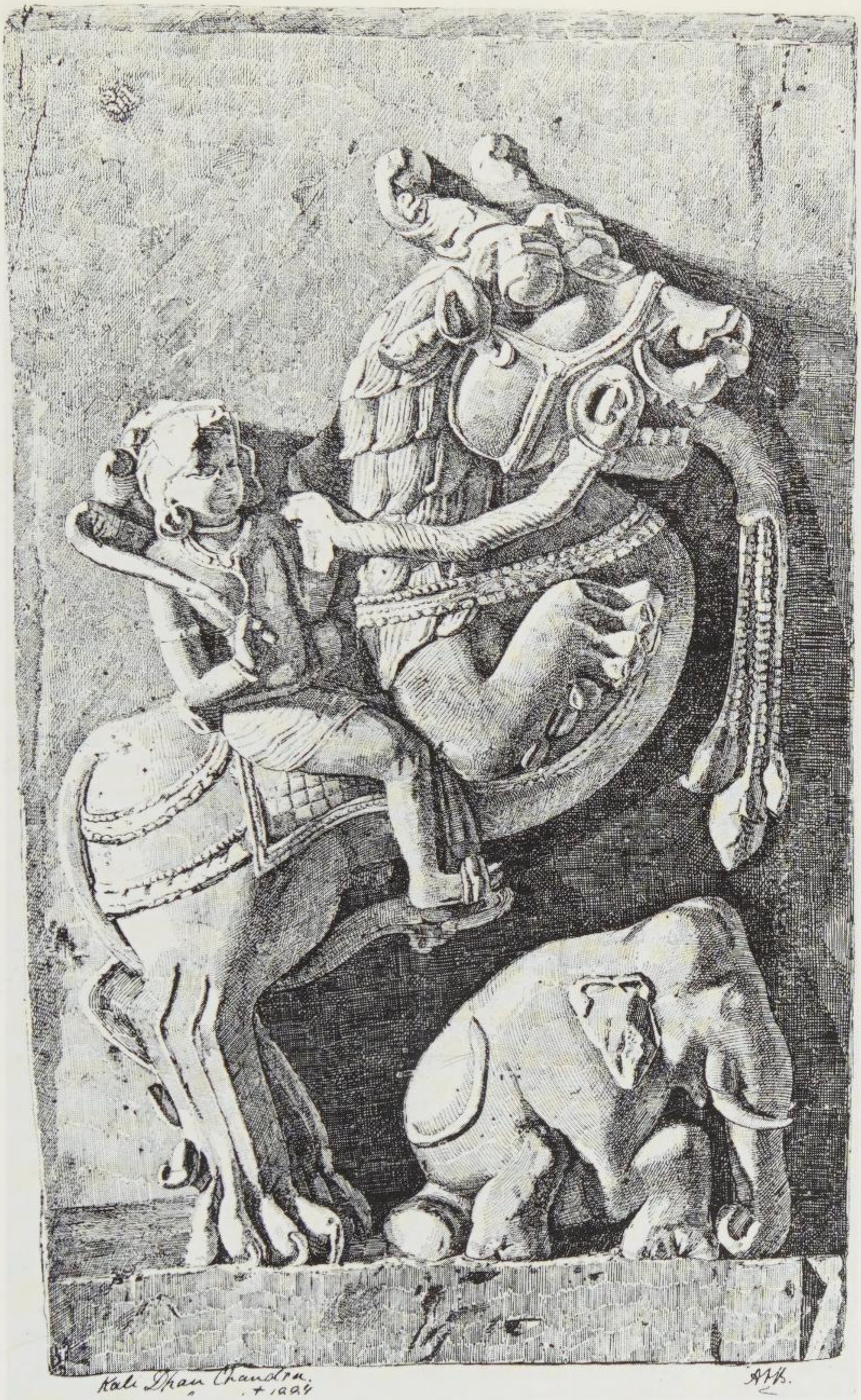
A less noticed but far-reaching effect of the infiltration of Classical taste on gentlemen artists was their acceptance of the nude as the *ne plus ultra* of artistic perfection. One of the drawbacks of early art teaching was the imposition of antique casts on artisans. The sobering fact that the *Apollo Belvedere* or the *Venus de' Medici* meant little to the average craftsman is revealed in an episode. In Madras, a mythological painting used for

teaching, *Danaë Showered with Gold Coins* (copy of Titian?), was a student favourite. When pressed by a European teacher for the reason for its popularity, the answer was blurted out after bashful giggling. It was a picture of a Memshib in an immodest state.[92] European figure drawing or painting meant little to an Indian student until he had absorbed western artistic ideas. Any art, implanted on an alien soil, was fated to be sterile and meaningless unless its cultural values were also adopted.

Within a decade the figure came to hold the undivided attention of art



24 Drawing by a Calcutta art student



25 K.D. Chandra. Graphic work by a Calcutta art student

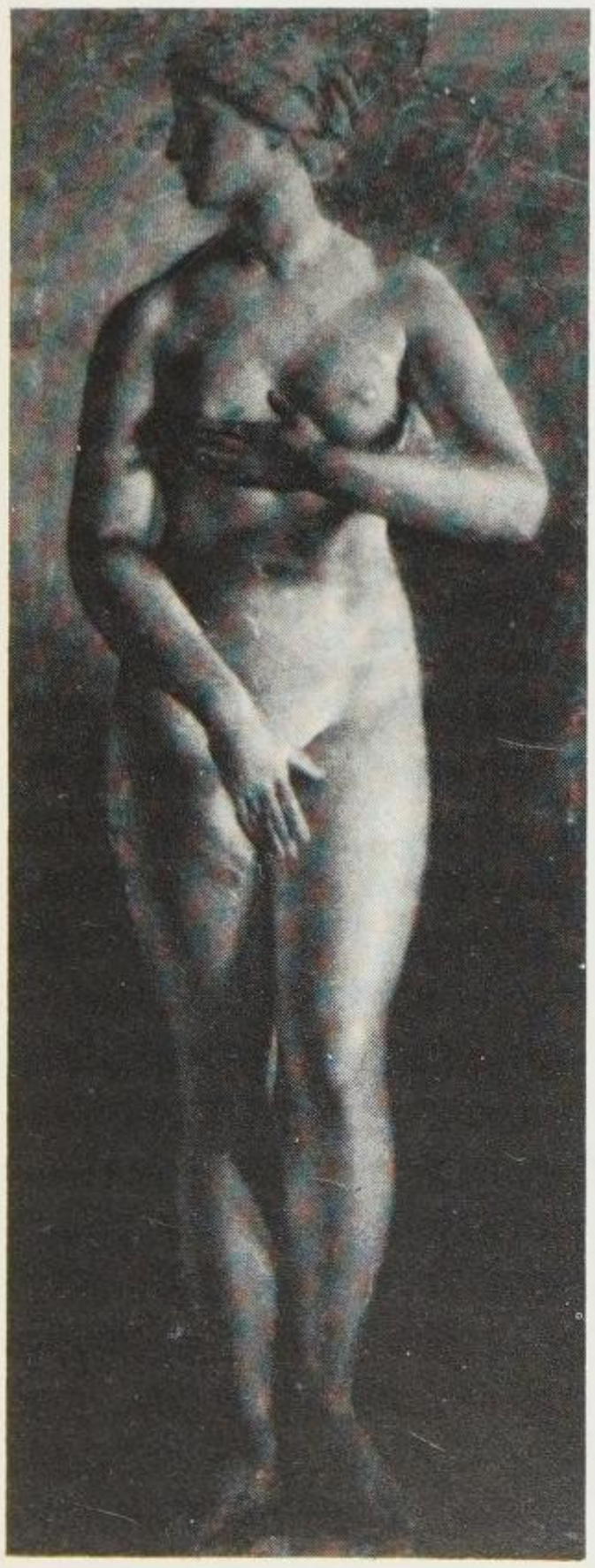
students. We have Dhurandhar's own words as to how thrilled he was on first seeing the antique statues in the front hall of the art school (Fig. 26):

> Standing in front of huge plaster-of-Paris statues of the *Venus de' Medici*, *Apollo Belvedere*, *Apollo Saurochthonos* and *The Discobolos* I felt as if in a dream . . . I went round and round the statues and yet I was not sated . . . Even out on the street, I felt like one possessed and kept seeing them appear before me.[93]

He decided to join the school there and then, braving the opposition of his family. The backgrounds of the first generation of academic artists further confirm the dominance of the English-educated in Bombay and Calcutta (see ch. 3). In Bombay, Parsi, Catholic, Jewish and Prabhu artists came from professional classes. In Bengal it was the bhadralok students, who were accused by Havell in 1910 of flooding the Calcutta art school. On taking charge of it in 1896, he pledged his support for artisans with stipends. The bhadralok parents did not object to this so long as their sons were not deprived of academic art. However, the stipend dangled before the artisan as a 'carrot' was likely to be abused. A student remained at the Madras art school for decades just for the lucre.[94] Not all salon artists of the early period were art-school trained, the notable exceptions being Ravi Varma and the landscape artist Jamini Gangooly. But their circumstances were different from those of the average elite artist. Varma belonged to a princely family of Kerala. Related to the wealthy Tagores, Gangooly's art education was completed at home under an English painter.[95]

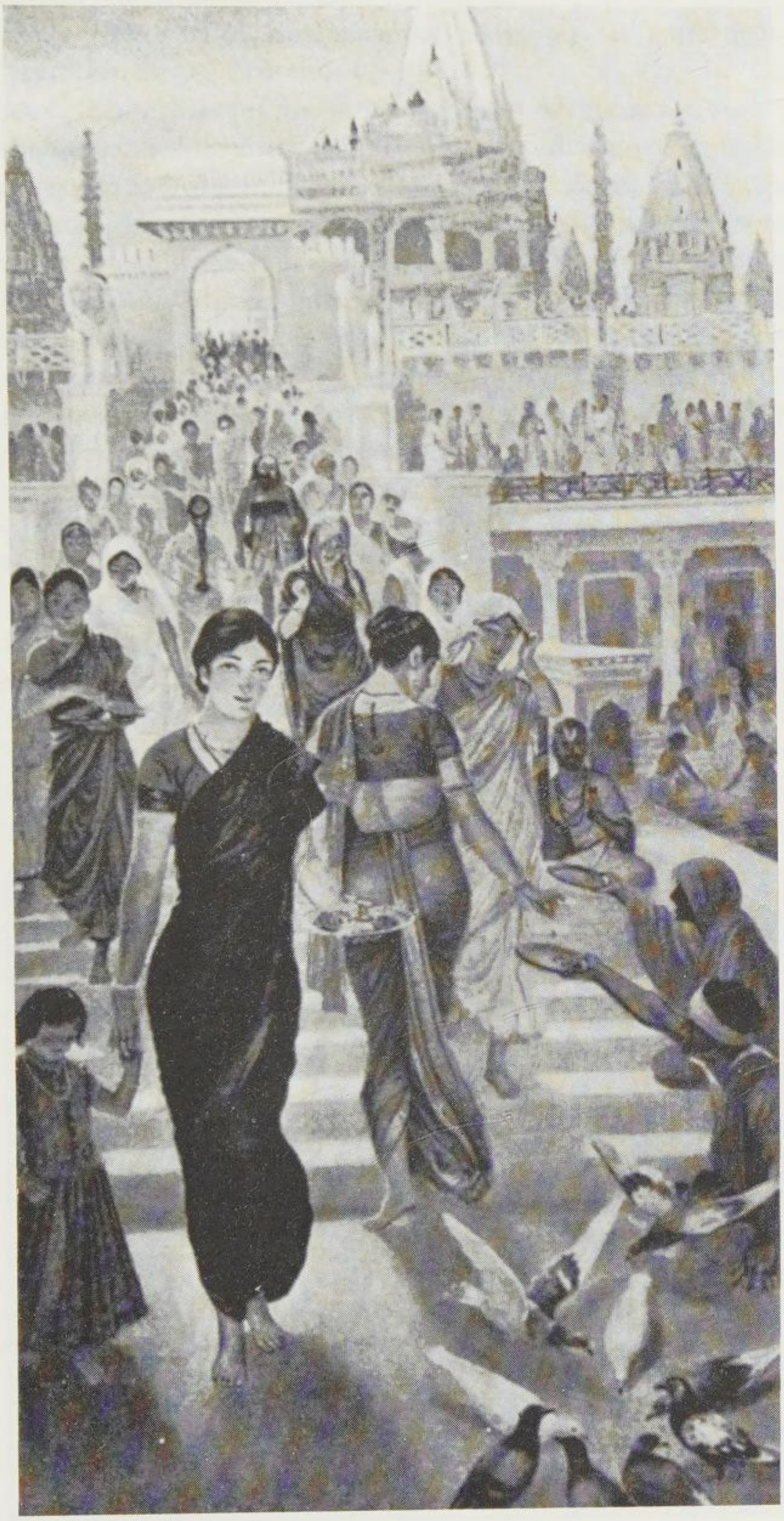
By the 1880s, as the priorities of the art schools were shifting imperceptibly, the intelligentsia, to which group belonged art students, became primed for the reception of academic art. In this acculturation process, it is easy to overlook the human element, and the specific role of the art teachers in inspiring their pupils. The successful implantation of naturalism owed much to the teachers, who fired the young students' imagination with the achievements of the Renaissance. Griffiths, for instance, lent Dhurandhar the life of Leonardo da Vinci.[96] The teacher's inspiration is evident in a comparison between Dhurandhar's *Steps to Devotion* and Griffiths' *The Temple Steps* (Figs 27, 28).

In view of their commitment to students, the early impressions of art teachers make interesting reading. Crowe, with his brief sojourn, was the least involved. Griffiths suffered initial disappointment as his expectations did not match student ability, finding them 'poor, ill-educated, docile, slow in execution'; yet he was fair-minded enough to notice their sense of colour, form, light and shade.[97] Before long he developed a special relationship with them, with a mixture of affection and authority. He had feuds with the Public Works Department in securing better wages for students, who were often paid less than the going rate. At the end of the Ajanta project, he wrote to the government on behalf of his head draughtsman, Pestonji, who was then out of work, 'I cannot speak too

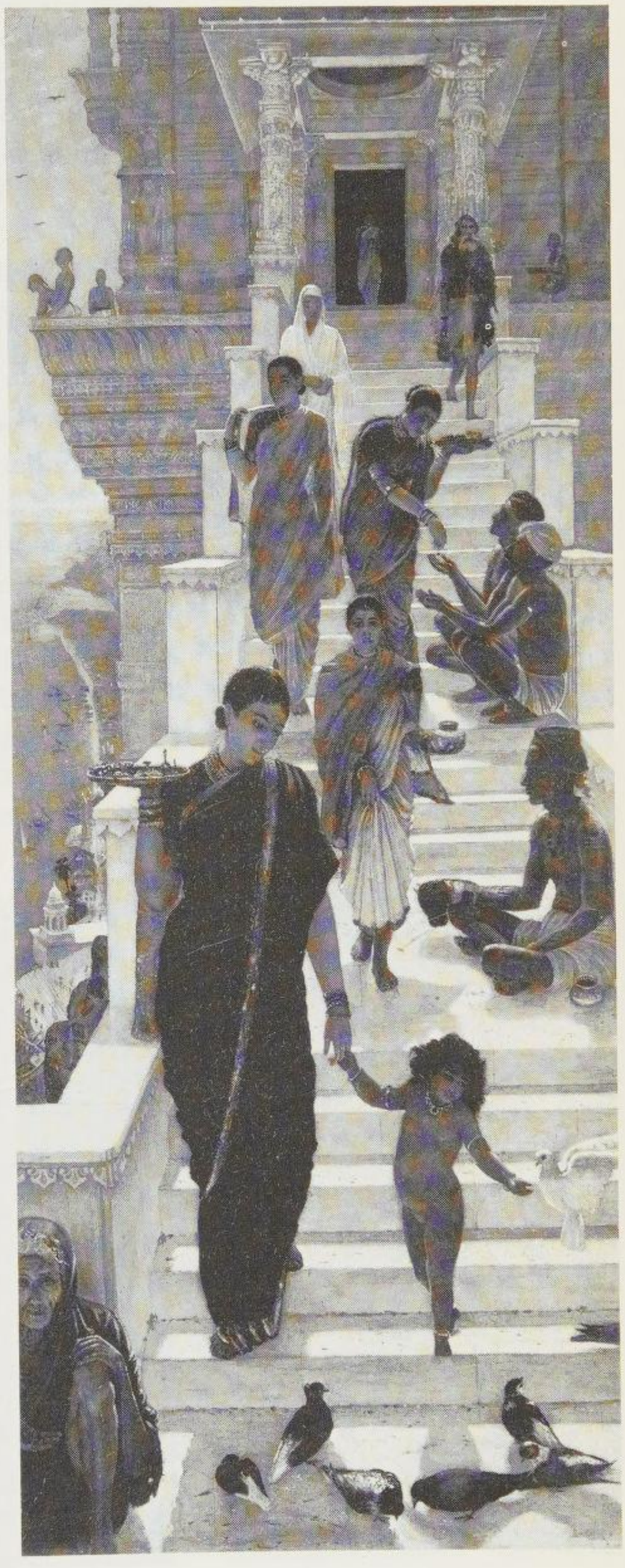


26 M. V. Dhurandhar: *Aphrodite of Knidos*, chalk drawing based on an antique at the school, one of the classical sculptures that persuaded him to join the school?

27 M. V. Dhurandhar: *Steps to Devotion*, watercolour, a nationalist icon (see p. 258), inspired by Griffiths Fig. 28



28 J. Griffiths: *The Temple Steps*, oil. An ambitious work sent to an annual Royal Academy exhibition (see p. 188)



highly for the able manner in which he had carried out my instructions'.[98] Griffiths' fatherly interest in his charges was recounted by Dhurandhar. At his farewell, Griffiths started to address the guests with the words, 'Ladies and gentlemen, masters and students, when the heart is full the mouth cannot speak', but he was overcome with emotion. His successor, Edwin Greenwood, was equally concerned with advancing the careers of students.[99]

Locke, not only committed but also the most open-minded, was named *mahātmā* (noble spirit) by his students. Idealistic and independent spirited, he had an early brush with authority when as a student he took part in a demonstration in London. As head of the art school, he earned the confidence of his pupils with his deep loyalty to them. Later he won the admiration of the bhadralok, before being forced out by the authorities, a broken man.[100] One of his early reports expressed great satisfaction with student progress, dismissing what he termed the European prejudice that 'the Bengali could only be a copyist'. Even in the young school, there were already a fair amount of 'good drawings in the round, antique and natural'. Unswayed by prejudice, he was quick to see that his young 'Bengali students, like English ones, get bored with freehand drawing and wish to graduate to colour.'[101] While British students, he felt, were more favourably placed, the average Bengali student, if not too poor to continue at the school, often had to contend with ill health and the lack of facilities at home. But in spite of all this Locke never lost faith in him, concluding that 'The standard [was] little if at all below that of an English Art School'.[102]

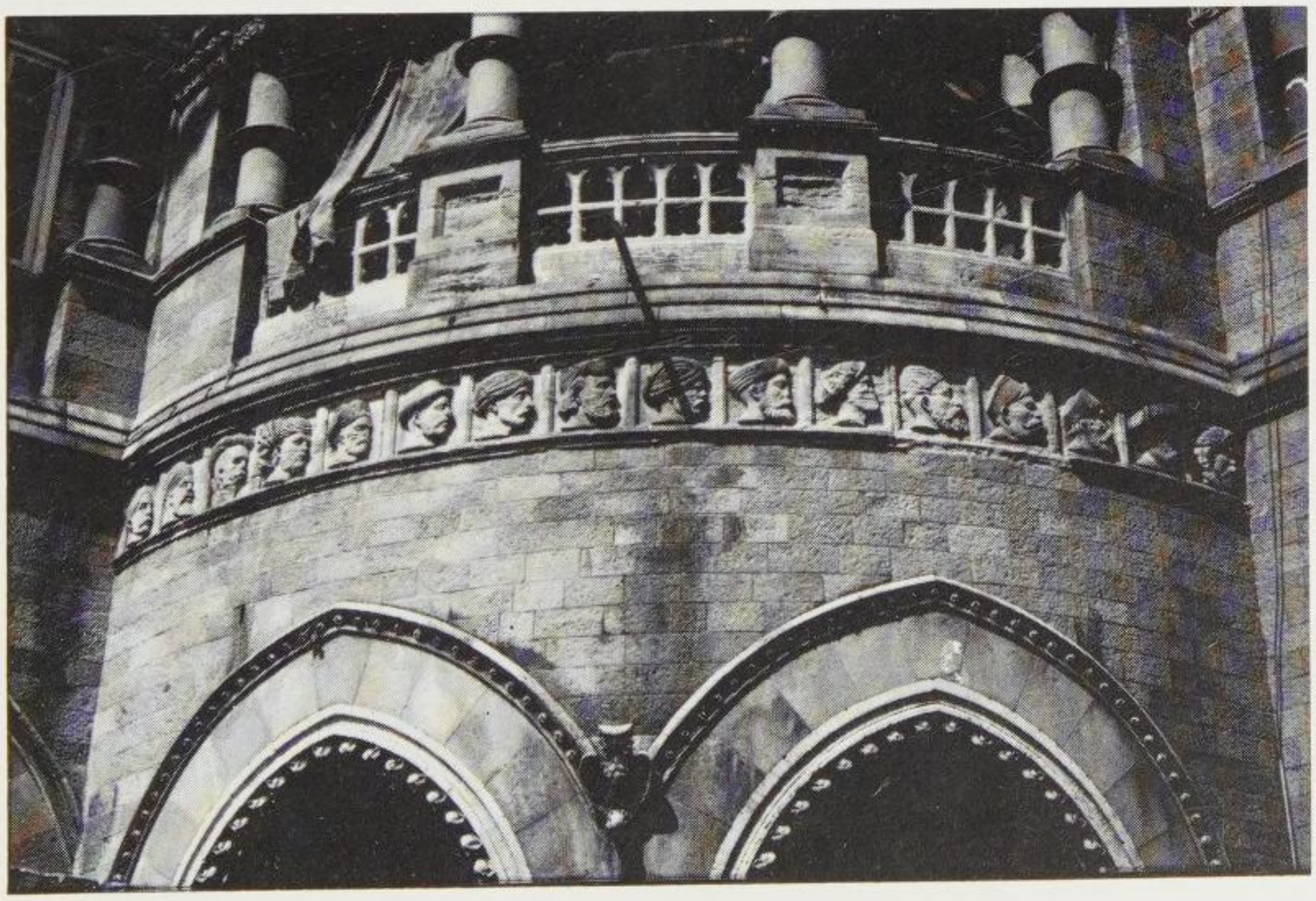
The aggressive proselytisation on an official level and the personal interest of teachers in their pupils helped consolidate the academic tradition in art schools. One final measure of success would be to examine what sort of career the students were able to make – a question about patronage that will be dealt with in greater depth in the next chapter. Meanwhile I shall only take up the commissions that the teachers obtained for their students.

The government could support artists through the Public Works Department, especially architectural decoration. Yet this only happened to some extent in Bombay, for which Kipling and Griffiths, decorative artists, were responsible. Griffiths headed a team of students who decorated the High Court and the Victoria Terminus, the main railway station of Bombay (Fig. 29). For the Gothic High Court of Bombay, four students furnished capitals, corbels, gargoyles and other architectural details. Four colossal heads of four different races of India were fashioned for the General Hospital. The Maharastran talent with sculpture was well used in rapidly expanding Bombay. But the opportunity was not always utilised by the PWD, as the art school report of 1867–8 complained.[103] Griffiths engaged his most promising students, Pestonji Bomanji, Jagannath Anant, N. Kushala and N. Raghava on his Ajanta

project, which took twelve years to complete. In the decoration of public buildings in Bombay under Kipling, students enjoyed giving 'play to the grotesque and the fanciful common to Indian and Mediaeval art'.[104] The students were also commissioned by the princely states of Kutch and Baroda.

Patronage in Calcutta tended to be private; for instance, portraits were much in demand by the affluent bhadralok. Bagchi and his generation also did book illustrations of quality for the following: a German work on anatomy, J. Fayrer's *Thanatopaedia of India* (1872), a compendium on Indian snakes, and Rajendralala Mitra's *Antiquities of Orissa* (1869–70), the first major Indian contribution to modern Indology. On the *Thanatopaedia*, *The Saturday Review* wrote, 'never have we seen the beauty of form and colour [of snakes] depicted with greater truth and skill than in . . . Fayrer's Report'.[105] *The Athenaeum* confessed that it was 'impossible to speak in exaggerated terms [about the illustrations] . . . we have never seen any representations of smaller objects equal to them in combined faithfulness of detail and artistic effect'.[106]

Locke felt pleased that developments in lithography (Fig. 30) and engraving had disproved that 'an illustrated book could not be produced' in Bengal. His students were employed by the Asiatic Society of Bengal to produce ethnographic and archaeological illustrations, in addition to casts of Indian aboriginal tribes. Locke was particularly confident that models of meteorites, destined for European museums, would be highly appreciated there because 'of an excellence and accuracy of execution hitherto



29 Decoration by Kipling and Griffiths' students of the Victoria Terminus building, the main railway station of Bombay

rarely obtained in Calcutta'.[107] At the end of the century other professions opened up for art students: draughtsmen for government departments, teachers who were needed after the introduction of elementary drawing in high schools, and finally professional photographers.[108] The chapter ends on the threshold of change in art education inaugurated by Havell at the Calcutta art school in 1896.

30 Ethnographic illustrations by students of Calcutta art school

SALON ARTISTS AND THE RISE OF THE INDIAN PUBLIC 3

[The *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* contain] the most inexhaustible . . . stores for pictorial representation which any country possesses. All that is needed to promulgate their beauty and complete their fame is that in their purer and nobler passages and with the powers of European Art, they should engage the service of the national pencil as they have fastened on the national memory and animated the national voice.

Address by Lord Napier, the Governor of Madras, 1871

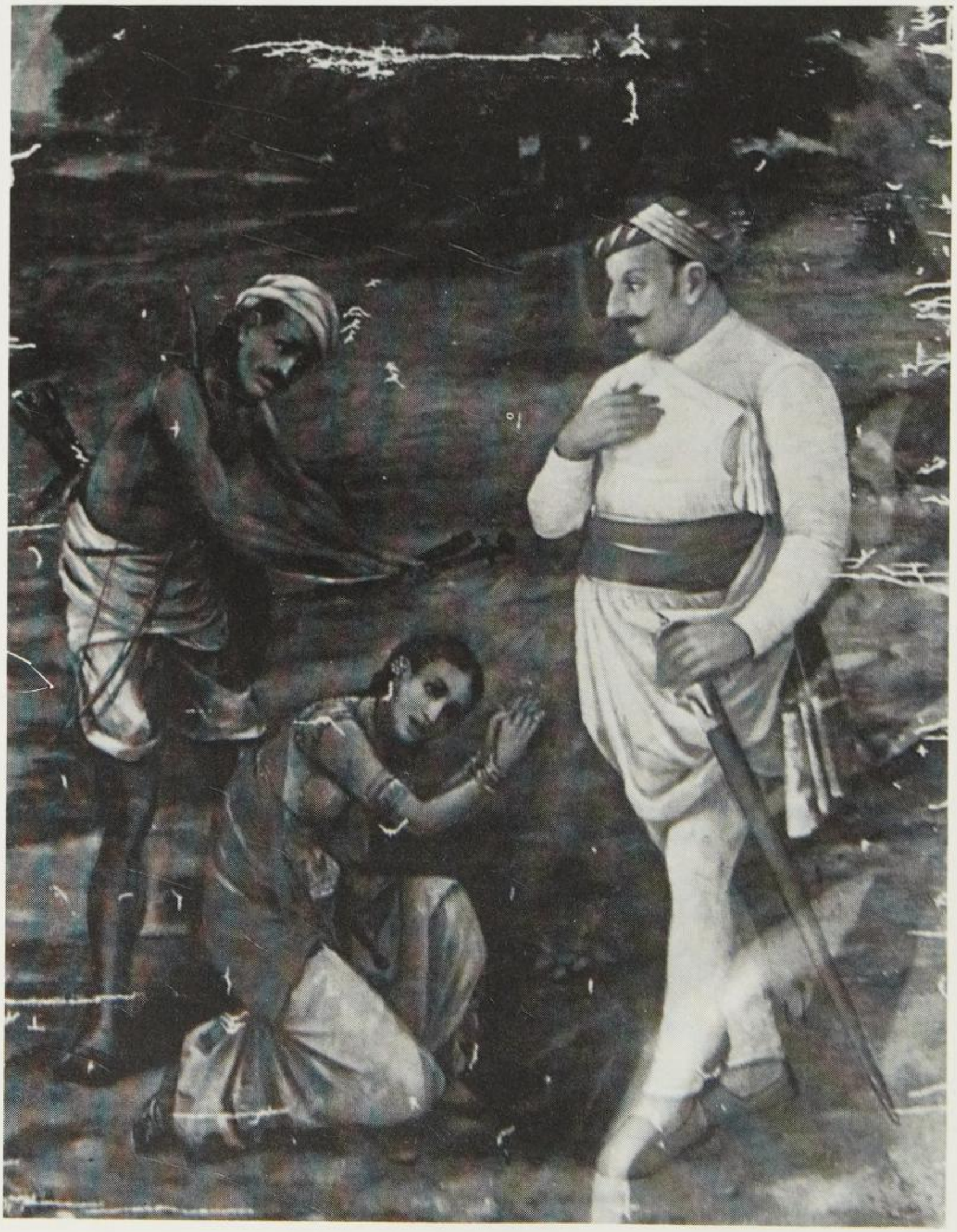
CHANGING RULES OF PATRONAGE

The growing vogue for salon art

Salon art, or academic naturalism, held sway in Europe in the last century, the most celebrated practitioners of which were the *artistes pompiers* of France and the 'olympians' of Britain. Its dominance in Indian art schools was symptomatic of the growing hold of naturalism in Indian society at large. The commissions won by art students in Calcutta and Bombay were the stepping-stones to their calling as salon artists. Unlike an uncertain future in the applied arts, the European teachers who groomed their students for a career in academic art had the backing of influential English officials. These officials took the view that Indian miniatures, for instance, no matter how skilful, were bereft of the moral concern that distinguished high art, whose pinnacle was history painting. However, if providence had deprived India of the fine arts, it had nonetheless provided her with the wherewithal to produce them, as the decorative arts proved. Hence, it behoved the rulers, such as the Governor of Madras at a public lecture in 1871, to direct the Indian painter towards the rich mythological lore that waited to be tapped with 'all the powers of European art'.[1]

Although there were oil painters in India before the 1870s, the rise of salon artists coincided with radical changes in artistic patronage. Three cases mentioned here will help us to appreciate the later developments.

Kundanlal Mistri (1850–1930) joined the Bombay art school in 1889 (Fig. 31). After winning a gold medal for freehand drawing, he went up to the Slade School in London to learn the secrets of figure painting. There he won a prize for a class study. A protégé of the Maharana of Mewar, a princely state relatively untouched by English education, Kundanlal returned to Mewar to spend his life as a court painter.[2] Despite his exposure to the new world of art, he remained dependent on traditional patronage. Two early Parsi painters trained in Europe, N. N. Writer and Navroji, were unable to set up an independent practice. Ravi Varma's brother, who knew them, spoke of Navroji: 'Poor man, he gets no orders



31 Kundanlal Mistri: *Begging Forgiveness*, oil, 1897

though he had learnt painting in Europe . . . He says it is hard to get on here'.[3]

From personal to institutional patronage

And yet, within a decade the new artists enjoyed an institutional support that was not confined to a particular region. The remarkable success of salon art followed a social revolution. The patronage of artists by individual aristocrats was in decline, to be replaced by the support of an art-conscious public. Artists now depended heavily on exhibitions, a change that can be gauged by similar developments in the West. In the eighteenth century, the rise of the art exhibition, art criticism and an art-conscious public owed to a change in the public's relationship to art and in the role of the artist himself. As early as 1808, artists used exhibitions to publicise their work. Diverse views on their works stimulated discussion.[4]

In India, art societies created the conditions for the diffusion of salon art. They were heirs to the eighteenth-century French salon, which moulded public taste through annual exhibitions, catalogues and reviews by prominent critics, such as Diderot. In 1769, the initiative passed on to the Royal Academy in Britain. The pre-eminence of Britain was recognised by the French painter, Jacques-Louis David: 'In our own time this custom of showing the arts to the public is practised in England and is called Exhibition . . . [it] was introduced in the last century by Van Dyck: the public came in crowds to admire his work: he gained by this means considerable fortune'.[5] Art societies in India took their cue from the Royal Academy, which in 1769 expected George III to uphold the public function of painting as 'the head of a great . . . Nation'.[6] The connection between art and nationhood is clearly spelt out here; the duty of artists as public-spirited figures was to paint.

Art societies were part of a larger process of the advent of European institutions in India. First formed by Europeans, associations were soon taken over by Indians for their own ends. Societies were set up by the English-educated with great zeal and deployed with consummate skill. In 1838, the Bengalis had formed the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, barely twelve years after the founding of its parent body in London: Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.[7] There was a proliferation of interest groups, forming and informing public opinion, lobbying in favour of particular issues and maintaining pressure on the government. The political importance of these associations in the rise of the Indian National Congress is increasingly recognised.[8]

Art societies were originally founded for British amateur artists in India, the Brush Club of Calcutta holding an exhibition in 1831. With the admission of Indians, they turned into an instrument of Raj patronage,

promoting the interests of the growing community of academic artists. Annual exhibitions held by these societies wère attended by the general public and widely reported in the press. Each season, the *Times of India*, for instance, published as many as five notices of the Bombay Art Society exhibition. Prize-winners were lionised in the press.[9] Journalism, the creator of public opinion in India, helped evolve an art-conscious public. In Britain, when public taste emerged in the eighteenth century, it was confined to 'rich consumers of the arts'.[10] While the Indian public was not always the wealthiest, it took a lively interest in art; and it was without exception English-literate.

The new patronage turned out to be a mixed blessing for Indian artists. The sales at shows were unpredictable, while artists lost the economic security of aristocratic patronage. The compensation was the publicity received, hitherto unthinkable in traditional artistic transactions. The earliest reliable figures for exhibition goers in India are scanty and available only in the case of Simla, the exclusive summer retreat of the Viceroy visited by British army officers, civilians and their families. The annual average turnout there was about two thousand until the First World War. If a small resort like Simla attracted such high numbers, one could well imagine how many more turned up in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.[11]

Annual exhibitions of art societies

Many of the British residents and their wives were talented amateurs who organised the art society exhibitions. These were held at different times of the year to enable individuals to enter the same work for different shows around the country. The exhibition circuit had its regulars, while newspaper reports convey to us the excitement generated by the shows. The exhibition seasons in Simla, Pune, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, the chief venues, clearly avoided the summer heat. The Calcutta season fell during Christmas, that of Bombay and Madras was around February. Simla's was in September, 'when the Rains were over, [and] Simla was really delightful'.[12] From the viewpoint of Anglo-Indian society, no exhibition was more prestigious than the one in Simla. Although, as the chief patron, the Viceroy was expected to grace the show with his presence, later that duty devolved on to lesser officials. Elgin and Curzon dispensed with the ritual of the opening address. Notwithstanding, Simla remained the favourite of the English amateur. According to Sir Richard Temple, there 'was a galaxy of amateur talent in water-colour painting then at Simla. Who that beheld them can forget the productions of Colonel Walter Fane . . . Major Baigree . . . [and] Captain Strahan . . . ?' From 1865 onwards, five to six hundred works were shown annually. Michael Buddulph, a friend of Temple, was the presiding spirit in Simla.[13]

Publications such as *The Indian Charivari* capture the flavour of contemporary reviews. As its coverage of the 1872 Simla exhibition makes clear, landscape painting was a favourite pastime of the British, especially army officers. The comic magazine reassured its readers that the light and shade in Colonel Brown's *Women Going to a Native Marriage* was well managed, refuting another critic who had alleged that he had not done himself justice that year. Colonel Fane's work, *Venetian Fishing Boats*, 'more thoroughly [brought] to one's recollection the Adriatic'. His *Junks in the Hong Kong Harbour* was, however, criticised as being too uniform, while Major Baigree's *Peep on the Punchmuree Road* was 'very good indeed'. Temple mentioned Baigree as 'one of the best amateur artists ever known in India'. But *The Indian Charivari*'s laurels went to *The Best Head of the Season* and its author, Thomas Landseer (brother of Edwin Landseer), the 'best hand of the season'.[14]

Social events marked the Simla exhibition, rivalling if not surpassing it. The seasons were enlivened by parodies of the exhibits, as in this passage by Rudyard Kipling as a young journalist:

> Mr C.P.I....t's [Ilbert's] 'There is no place like home', though a palpable plagiarism from Sir Edwin Landseer, will, it is to be feared, be caviare to the general . . . A grand subject by the same is 'Better Fifty Years of Europe than a Cycle of Cathay'. All that is seen in this ultra Whistlerian canvas is the stern of a P & O steamer looming through the fog.[15]

Good-humoured lampooning of exhibits, especially by high officials such as Sir Courtney Ilbert, was an accepted part of the game. The top award in Simla was offered by the Viceroy. The prizes were so attractive that painters from as far afield as Britain were keen to enter the competition. Nor were visiting artists such as R. D. Mackenzie averse to participating. He was in India to paint the official picture of the Durbar of 1903. The best years of the society appear to have been between 1909–14, when the number of exhibits rose from 655 to 1073 and the participants' enthusiasm was matched by that of the public.[16]

Initially amateurs dominated the exhibitions, but soon it became apparent that the preservation of standards, not to mention the survival of the shows, depended on professionals. Though Indians were never actively debarred, most of them could not afford to exhibit outside their home towns. The exceptions were Ravi Varma, Manchershaw Pithawalla and Jamini Gangooly, the three regular prizewinners at Simla. According to a contemporary observer, 'with the exception of Mr. J. P. Gangooley and one or two others, there were few Indian exhibitors of merit until [the 1920s], but stimulated by special prizes, there has of late been an increasing number of exhibits by Indians, some of which show great skill, while others are excellent of their class'.[17]

Even at Simla, the most English venue, the usefulness of an art society as an 'unofficial' channel for 'improving' Indian taste was not lost on the

Raj. Besides the fact that these societies enjoyed Viceregal blessing, high officials themselves were keen participants. Temple, *The Indian Charivari*'s 'Knight of the Brush', was an amateur watercolourist who voraciously sketched Indian scenes. In 1868, he submitted his very first watercolours to the Simla exhibition. No less a person than Lord Lytton, the Viceroy, sent his copy of Titian to one of the Simla shows.[18] Precisely because the Simla art society was for fine arts and dominated by Europeans, in 1879 a rival exhibition of applied arts was held in the town with government encouragement.[19] In 1885, Dufferin, in his opening address to the Simla exhibition, did not miss the opportunity to restate the official view: 'if a zeal and genuine love of art were widely diffused among our wealthier Indian fellow subjects, a hugely honourable, lucrative and useful career would be opened to hundreds and hundreds of aspiring young men . . .'.[20]

The Raj obsession with 'improving' Indian taste did occasionally cause resentment among Anglo-Indians. The 1884 season disappointed some of them, to judge by a pamphlet of the time. Its anonymous author, a woman artist, complained of declining numbers and falling standards. She held the Viceroy culpable with his non-committal opening address. Assailing the lack of an official policy towards the resident English, she demanded more positive support.[21]

The nature of Raj patronage of Indian salon artists is indicated by the special category, 'excellent of their class'. If the colonial regime encouraged Indians at these shows, it also marginalised them under the rubric, 'native work in a particular medium'. Ravi Varma and other early Indian artists won awards in this category, which clearly demarcated Europeans from Indians, even if both were salon artists. Whatever style they painted in, Indians were seen as having clear cultural attributes, as in Britain women artists 'were treated . . . as distinct from mainstream cultural activity . . .'.[22] In India this was an echo of the racial segregation in the bureaucracy, where 'covenanted' posts were almost exclusively reserved for Europeans, while Indians filled the lower echelons. And yet, for a successful implant of naturalism in India, the aim of the officials, Indian artists could not be indefinitely excluded from the mainstream. So in practice the successful salon artist soon transcended the category, 'native artist'. A concept of difference, nonetheless, defined colonial art policy.[23]

Shows in Madras and Bombay, metropolitan centres

British exclusiveness was harder to maintain in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, where the Indian elite outnumbered Europeans. The oldest permanent art society in India was the Fine Arts Society of Madras, founded by the British in the 1860s. Many of its members were keen, women amateur painters. Since the art school in Madras was craft-oriented, few local students took part in the shows. One of the first Indians

to do so was Ravi Varma, whose reputation was made there in 1873. This southern society was disbanded early in this century. Today, very little is known about it, except that Edgar Thurston was the Honorary Secretary in its crucial years. In 1901–2, as keeper of the Government Museum of Madras, he formed a pioneer collection of 'the nature school of painting according to the Western canon'.[24] The best paintings by Indians were chosen from the Society's exhibitions. Raja and Ravi Varma were persuaded to donate their works, whilst Pithawalla and J. P. Gangooly were purchased for the Museum.[25]

On the west coast, around 1873, the first art society was formed at Pune. A military station, its shows were dominated by local army officers. A great deal more is known about the Bombay Art Society, the only one that is still active. Founded in 1888 to encourage amateurs and to 'educate' public opinion, it held its early exhibitions at the art school. Though the Society later moved to the Town Hall, its close links with the school in promoting academic art were not severed. The successive Governors, Reay, Lloyd and Brabourne, were active patrons not only of the Society but of art in Bombay.[26]

The Bombay exhibitions were major social events. The Society met before the show to decide on framing, hanging, and photographing works for the catalogue. The first exhibition opened on 19 February 1889 to the strains of the British national anthem played by a Marine battalion. The grand occasion was presided over by the Governor of Bombay, while the chief guests were the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, representing the British monarch in India. Some two hundred members were present. About five hundred pictures, a great many of them by amateurs, were hung. The Governor's prizes went to the two favourites of Simla, Colonel Strahan for his landscape, *Native Huts at Bichu, Masoori*, and Mrs H. W. Ulith for her figure study, *A Surati Boy*. In the Indian section, five 'native gentlemen', as the *Times of India* put it, received awards. A portrait by the art student Pestonji Bomanji was judged the best. The Governor, Lord Reay, complimented him and Ravi Varma, the two rising stars of salon art.[27] Several days later a sumptuous conversazione (a typical Victorian social occasion for self-improvement) was held with a band adding a festive note. The *Times of India* reviewed the works on the 25th, boasting that the event was far more interesting than the 'good old exhibition . . . in another place'.[28] This was a playful reference to Simla, 'top of the pecking order'.

Bearing in mind Indian susceptibilities, the Society made arrangements for Indian ladies to visit the show in purdah. There were participating women artists but expatriate Englishwomen dominated the exhibitions, as for instance in 1892. Putlibai Wadia and K. K. Kama, from the westernised Parsi community, were the rare Indian exceptions.[29]

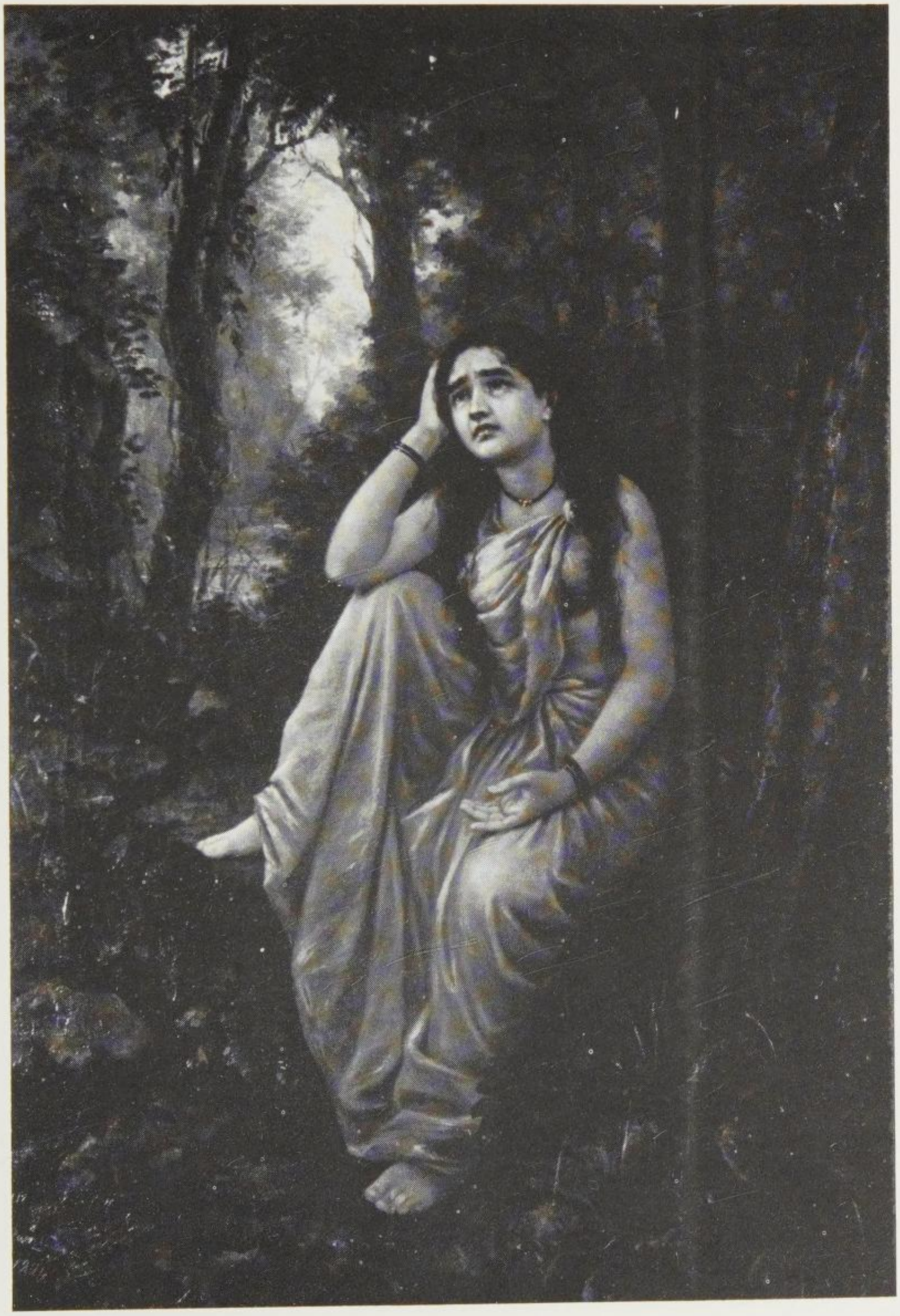
The detailed reviews covering the shows for days in the *Times of India* indicate the growth of art criticism. The exhibitions were often a pretext

for showing off works by British artists in private collections. But even great reputations fell victim to the reviewer's intrepid pen. In 1898, the leading painter Herkomer's portrait of Lord Harris was dismissed as failing to capture his characteristic expression.[30] Ravi Varma too received some candid remarks on his works (Fig. 32). In 1894 the reviewer pointed out that not only was his range of subjects as wide as last year, but his

32 Ravi Varma: *Sairindhrī*, oil. Bombay Art Society exhibition, 1891

execution was much above the 'mediocrity that then characterised his work'. The likenesses were pleasing and the drawing of heads and hands excellent, though the drapery was 'difficult to tackle'. His Damayantī, 'with her poor eyes quenched with weeping, and her attitude of disconsolate loveliness [was] very powerfully depicted' (Fig. 33).[31]

In 1896 Varma's prize-winning *Brave Kusumavati* was quaintly de-



33 Ravi Varma: *Damayantī in Distress*, oil. Bombay Art Society, 1894

scribed as 'a lady of ancient times in distress'. Though he won yet another prize with his *Harishchandra and Tārāmati*, the newspaper refused to bow to the consensus. While *Moonrise at the Apollo Bundar* achieved 'a clear piece of colour and an admirable effect [it was] spoilt by the impossible size of the moon as compared with the man in the boat'. About his younger brother, Raja Varma's *Pining For Freedom* the reviewer had this to say: 'Why paint face so fair? They are natives of this country, yet [their] flesh tones are paler than [those of] Europeans'. Another canvas by Ravi Varma was patronisingly described as a 'lovely bit of colour, marred by over blackness of the hair'. The paper ended on a generous note: 'It is delightful to see what strides the artist makes. One of the two edges of that dangerous weapon, colour, has very happily become blunt, and both this picture and that next to it are full of promise'.[32]

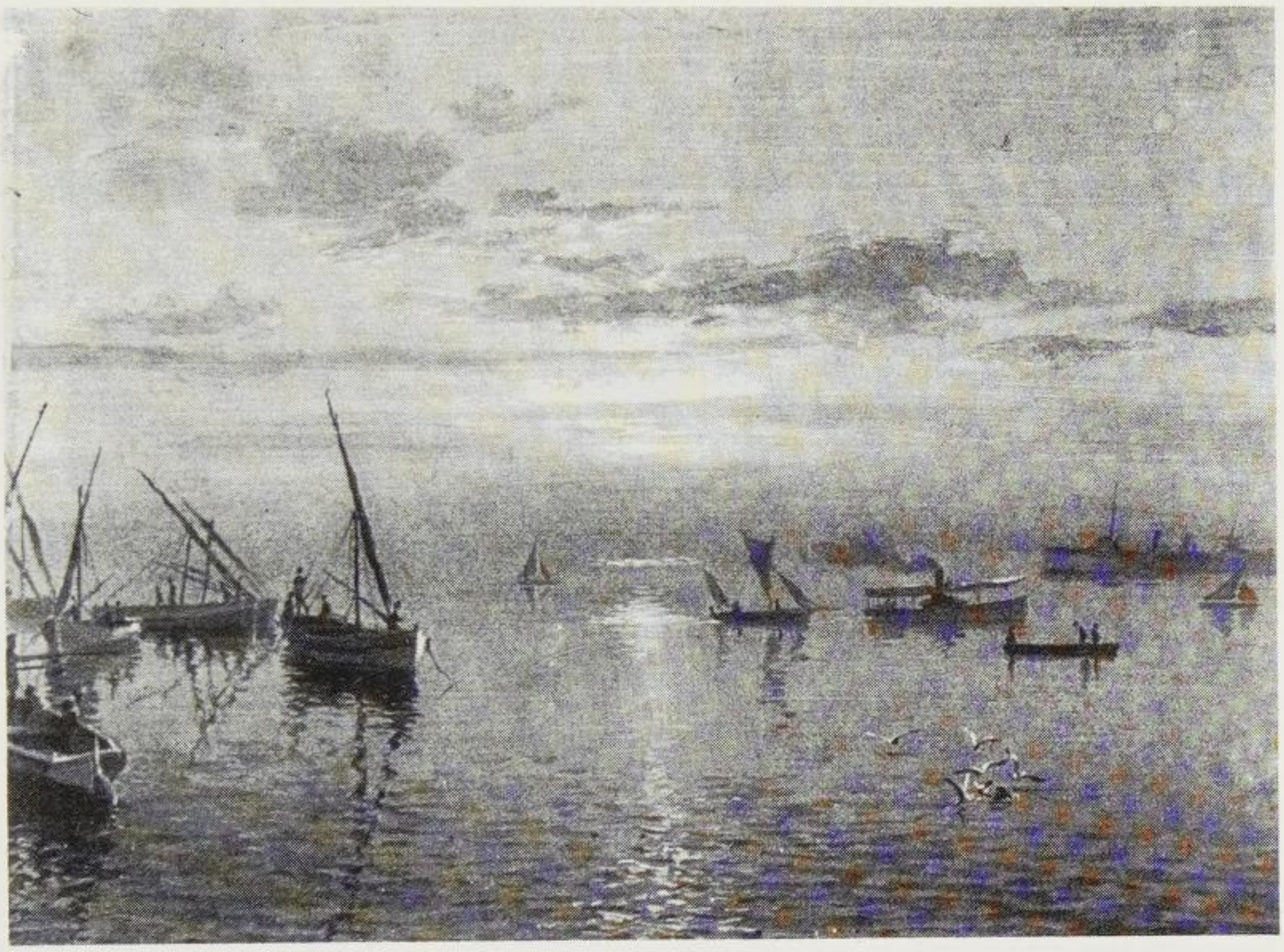
The success in Bombay, as in Simla, depended on professional artists, many of whom submitted works in the hope of selling. Augusto Felici, the Italian sculptor, was resident at the Baroda court during 1892–5. Although he had left India by 1896, his works were entered by Baroda. James Payton, the first teacher at the Bombay art school, regularly submitted his works but sometimes failed to receive a favourable notice. Other teachers at government art schools were regular contributors. Griffiths' ambitious work, *The Temple Steps*, destined for the Royal Academy, was shown here in 1892. Two years later, Jobbins, head of the Calcutta art school, sent his views of Kanchenjangha and Venice, produced on 'furloughs' from the school. In 1898, Havell's landscapes drew admiring comments for their professionalism and '*plein-air*' effect. He was probably the first to show works in a post-Impressionist style in India. An accomplished painter from a family of artists, Havell's other preoccupations prevented him from developing his career as a painter.

Normally, the annual shows at the Bombay Art Society were for the benefit of local artists, mostly from the art school. Well-known outsiders were Ravi and Raja Varma, temporary residents in Bombay, and Jamini Gangooly (Fig. 34). By 1898, a fate similar to that of Simla overtook the Society. The *Times of India* lamented falling standards and poor sales, though the works were 'reasonably priced'.[33]

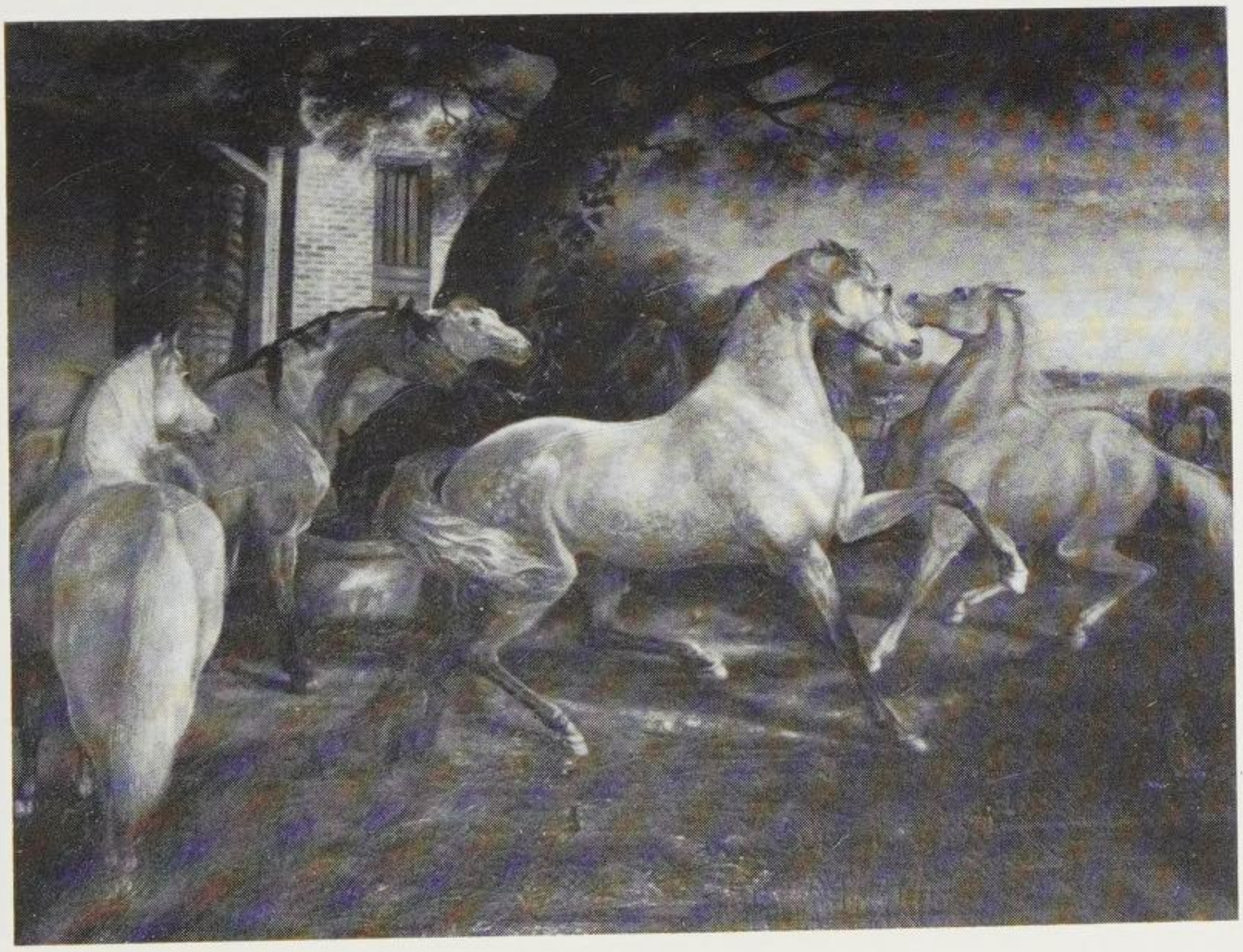
Exhibitions in the Raj capital

Surprisingly, in the last century Calcutta never enjoyed a flourishing society such as the one in Bombay. This had something to do with the Viceroy's prior commitment to Simla. Though a fine art society did not exist until 1889, the Society for the Promotion of Industrial Art had arranged an exhibition as early as 1855 to publicise the school run by it. From the seventies, winter art exhibitions took place in Calcutta, though intermittently. The first one, held in December 1871, included *A Spirited*

Group of Horses (Fig. 35) by Debendra Mallik of the Marble Palace, a student under Locke.[34] When the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, arranged an exhibition in March 1873, it was to celebrate the achievements of government art schools. This was the show that prompted Temple to declare Calcutta the leader in fine art. That winter also saw a public art



34 J. P. Gangooly: *Seascape*, oil. Bombay Art Society gold medal 1910



35 D. Mallik: *A Spirited Group of Horses*, oil, Calcutta fine art exhibition, 1871

exhibition in the city. *The Indian Charivari* hailed the occasion with a full-page cartoon, 'Rising Genius' (Fig. 36). Students from the art school found ready buyers for their works, but as professionals, they were debarred from the prize competition.[35]

I have chosen 1874, a successful year, to examine the nature of such events in Calcutta. Northbrook and Temple were the moving spirits behind this exhibition, the latter predictably submitting his own works to it. Local zamindars came forward to encourage Indian talent with prizes

36 *Rising Genius, The Indian Charivari*, 1873

and purchases. Prominence was given to the European collections of the English and Bengali residents of Calcutta. Copies of masters – Carlo Dolci, Guido Reni, Titian, Correggio, Terborch, Metzu, Greuze, Watteau, Millais and G. F. Watts – were proudly displayed. Nor were works by British artists in India – the Daniells, George Chinnery, Charles D'Oyly, Edward Lear and Colesworthy Grant – neglected. Of singular historical interest was Gilbert Stuart's painting of George Washington, presented by the residents of Philadelphia to the Bengali shipping magnate, Ramdulal Dey. A pupil of Benjamin West, Stuart's studio in Philadelphia specialised in portraits of the 'father' of the American nation. Dey's own likeness by Chinnery also featured in the show.[36]

The exhibition did not lack a quota of army officers and art teachers. Among traditional Indian artists, the court painters, Hansaji Raghunath of Baroda (Fig. 37) and Ramaswamy Naidu of Travancore dominated. Naidu carried off the prize for 'the best work by a native artist'. Art students were well represented, led by Pestonji Bomanji of Bombay. At the opening, Temple made clear the imperial mission: 'It is well that the Bengal native youths of this rising generation should, from the time they enter school, by the exhibition of works of art, learn to see all objects of external nature portrayed tastefully and beautifully, so that while their reason is cultivated, simultaneously their imagination may be enlarged, and their taste refined.'[37] *The Indian Charivari*, the comic magazine, magnanimously echoed the sentiment:

> Appy [sic] is Charivari to be able to congratulate some of the natives . . . on having shown so much talent for the fine art of painting . . . at the Fine Art Exhibition this year in Calcutta. Let them go on and prosper, endeavouring to become real artists instead of mere copyists, as too many of them are at present . . . Rome was not built in a day . . . but there is quite sufficient of the artistic fire developed in some of the pictures to raise hopes of a future race of Indian artists . . .[38]

The 1879 exhibition was so popular that a second edition of the catalogue was issued. Pestonji, whose star was on the ascendant, received the Viceroy's gold medal with his *Head of a Gosain*. He was the first Indian to win the highest overall prize at a salon exhibition, thereby transcending the label, 'native artist'. But local talents had no reason to feel despondent. Fourteen art-school trained artists contributed sixty-six paintings and drawings from life and one hundred and twenty-two graphic works; they won seven out of nine prizes in the category of native artists. Three successful early artists, Annada Bagchi, Bamapada Bandopadhaya and Nabakumar Biswas, were among them, the last two winning prizes for figure work and still life. There was also the pre-art-school painter Gangadhar Dey. The most remarkable feature of the show was the presence of twenty-five women artists, most of them Bengali and married.[39]

Following the success of the exhibitions, the Calcutta Art Society was founded in 1889. It held joint exhibitions with Bombay and exchanged student works with it. Jobbins, the Principal of the Calcutta school, gratefully noted the prizes offered by it: 'the impulses given to local art and the incentive to greater excellence produced in the school by the . . . Society, cannot be overestimated'.[40] Art societies were the order of the day. Between 1892–3, Bengali artists set up the 'Indian Association for the

37 Hansaji Raghunath: *Maharani Jamna Bai*, 1878, oil.

Promotion of Fine Arts and the National Gallery' and the 'Bhāratiya Shilpa Samiti' as *fora* for debates on art, thus putting art on the nationalist agenda.[41]

High officials encouraged salon art only as individuals. Official patronage was reserved for the industrial arts. Hence, it was fitting that in 1883–4 the imperial capital played host to the grandly titled Calcutta International Exhibition to encourage art wares. While the organisers spared no pains to procure lifesize traditional sculptures of the west coast, the exhibition was to be above all a demonstration piece on the progress of art schools. The new art teaching claimed to combine the best of East and West. A 'higher class' of decorative work produced by the Calcutta art school was proudly displayed: terracotta vases copied from Greco-Roman antiques, but decorated with relief figures of Hindu inspiration.[42]

As in other spheres, here too the gradual encroachment of the fine arts was evident. Although the organisers' brief was the industrial arts, since the art policy itself had failed to separate fine and applied arts, paintings and sculptures were not excluded from the exhibition – indeed they were positively encouraged. As the official catalogue announced, even if sculpture 'had never risen to a very high order in India, there [were] indications that it [was] capable of development'.[43]

The fine art section was offered as the triumph of western teaching. Gold and silver medals were showered on successful candidates: on oils, watercolours and drawings by the Calcutta Art Studio (CAS), a commercial concern set up by art school graduates, and on copies of Ajanta frescoes by the students of the Bombay art school. The Calcutta students produced life studies in oils, still lifes as well as copies of European paintings in the government art gallery. An educational section demonstrated the progress of art teaching in Bombay – a series of class drawings at various stages of instruction, culminating in life painting and the student copy of an architectural design by Griffiths. Indian and European professional artists, including Theodore Jensen the portrait painter, were also present (Fig. 38). Finally, the Calcutta Art Studio lithographs and Poona Chitrashala Press oleographs, the ideal marriage of western technology and popular art, won accolades.[44]

The taste for academic art spread rapidly through art societies. The process reached a high-water mark in 1876 with the opening of a public gallery in Calcutta amid bhadralok rejoicing. The official feeling was that even though exhibitions had helped instil a taste for naturalism in the English-literate, the quality of the works shown there was not the very best. Therefore a permanent display of western masterpieces as an inspiration to the youth of the country was required

> not that they might learn to produce feeble imitations of European art, but rather that they might study European methods of imitation and apply them to the representation of scenery, architectural monuments, ethnical varieties, and national costumes in their own country.[45]

The gallery was the brainchild of two of the most artistically active administrators, the Viceroy Lord Northbrook, nephew of Thomas Baring the great collector, and Sir Richard Temple, who was now the Governor of Bengal. Northbrook gave the lead with a gift of paintings that included two Madonnas by Sassoferrato and copies of old masters. The rest were purchased by officials when they were on leave in Britain. The gallery consisted of a few originals by minor artists and many copies of old masters.[46]

38 Pestonji Bomanji: *Lady Feeding a Parrot*, oil, shown at the 1883 Calcutta exhibition

Temple is worth quoting here as a guide to the official motive behind the Gallery:

> In such a place as Calcutta, the establishment of an Art Gallery must be interesting from any and every point of view. But the interest is heightened when the gallery can be the means of daily instruction, [it] will become a lecture room for classes of native students, [it] may impart additional vigour to an institution designed to elevate the taste, refine the skill and enlighten the ideas of the native youth who are learning art as a means of livelihood, and may thus serve an important educational purpose.[47]

GENTLEMEN ARTISTS IN CENTRES OF COLONIAL ART

The artistic personality and its concerns

The students whom Temple had in mind here were the English-literate. An early artist on whom the gallery made a deep impression was Annada Bagchi, for it opened up an exciting new world. The rise of this generation was attested by the influential journalist, Ramananda Chatterjee: 'the upper strata are gradually losing this disinclination to physical exertion. That men of the upper classes like Ravi Varma and Mhatre are taking to the pursuit of the fine arts is a sign that better days are about to dawn upon the world of Indian art'.[48] Those wishing to take up an artistic career gravitated to Bombay and Calcutta, places of expanding opportunities, though fewer than Madras for reasons suggested before.

The brief lives of early salon artists that give us an insight into the age are 'Burckhardtian' vignettes rather than chronological portraits. They are meant to fulfil three functions: to provide an overview of the 'explosion' of academic art in India which ousted earlier painting schools; to examine the professional success of its practitioners; and finally to sketch the milieu that encouraged the self-image of these artists as romantic individualists. The patrons, who shared these views, were of two kinds: purchasers of academic works, and indirect ones such as the art-conscious public at large who supported art exhibitions with their presence and criticism. Salon artists began their careers several decades before the rise of artistic nationalism (see ch. 7), though a few long-lived academic artists continued down to the end of the colonial period and even beyond. They belonged to the period of optimistic westernisation, the age when naturalism was accepted as a *sine qua non* of good art. They had drunk at the fountain of Romanticism, which continued to refresh them throughout their lives.

The aspirations of the gentlemen artists were utterly unlike those of the earlier court artists. They were imbued with western individualism that placed a high premium on cerebral work. In the eighteenth century,

Poussin, for instance, insisted that noble art should give no hint of craftsmanship, a sentiment endorsed in *The Discourses* of Reynolds, a mentor of Indian academic artists.[49] To the gentleman artist the artistic act was essentially a self-conscious one that thrived on constant reflection. Such idealisation of artistic individualism led in its turn to the devaluing of communal art in India based on artisanal skill. No mere craftsman, the artist was seen as an intellectual by himself and by his patron. The art school teachers noticed that a decorative painter was not held in high esteem among Indians, and was 'little better than a common mechanic'.[50]

Romanticism in the West had first led to the debasement of notions of artistic craftsmanship. Perhaps no single English word has been more abused in this context than *genius*. In its modern sense it probably occurs first in Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749): 'By the wonderful force of genius only, without the least assistance of learning . . .'.[51] The Romantics placed genius above mere talent; they glorified inventiveness and the self-taught artist. These literary ideas sprouted on the fertile ground of colonial India, creating the image of the charismatic artist – a glamorous image that became firmly lodged in Indian consciousness. Westernised artists in their turn found confirmation of artistic individualism in European literature, in biographies of great artists.[52] Many of them identified themselves with the ideal of the tragic genius, the supreme creator who was prepared to defy philistine society and embrace poverty in the relentless pursuit of self-expression. An extreme consequence of this was to turn some of the salon artists into solitary figures, driven by their sense of destiny, ploughing lonely furrows, revelling in their isolation. Significantly, when nationalism surged across the country, it was this very individualism that left these artists, with a few exceptions, high and dry. They were simply reduced to anachronisms. For their part, salon artists were unwilling or unable to organise themselves against the emerging forces, apolitical as they were by outlook and temperament. Some of them made half-hearted attempts to re-define their own works by the new cultural criteria of orientalism but they stood little chance of success.[53]

Such profound changes in artistic outlook demanded equally new artistic genres and new criteria of taste. Art was cherished not for craftsmanship but for the idea expressed. Along with the pre-eminence of the artistic *idea*, the mastery of representation was viewed as a sign of a highly developed artistic personality. And what better than the academic portrait, which involved the highest degree of verisimilitude? It was clearly the patron's favourite. Portraiture rapidly overtook other subjects at the art school. 'If our 163 students were asked which branch . . . they would rather cultivate, the majority of them would answer portrait painting', quipped an art teacher in Calcutta. According to a government report of 1888, portrait painters in Calcutta charged between Rs 100 to 300 for life-sized portraits. In comparison, genre scenes fetched only Rs. 25.[54]

While the high society of Calcutta sat for oil portraits, the ordinary bhadralok was willing to be captured by the newfangled machine. Hence, for the failed artist, portrait photography was the last resort so long as he could afford a camera. A contemporary advertisement attests to the popularity of photographic portraits: 'To prevent disappointment, please make an engagement by correspondence. Will wait upon respectable parties at their places when called. Please mark address'.[55] When the art graduate could not even afford a camera, he spent hours tinting photographs for commercial studios. This 'popular' art in India had blurred the distinction between painting and photography.[56]

The demand for landscapes was limited; so were ambitious history paintings that were beyond the purse of all except the wealthiest. Sculptors were the least in demand and they fared better in Bombay than in Calcutta, as the ground was assiduously prepared by art teachers. In the twentieth century, a steady stream of public commissions came their way: B. V. Talim (1888–1970), a prize-winning sculptor, was responsible for the full-length statue of the early Congress leader, Dadabhai Naoroji, outside Oriental Buildings and of the English judge, Sir Lawrence Jenkins, in the High Court Gardens; G. K. Mhatre sculpted the political leaders, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Other Bombay sculptors produced portraits of local dignitaries, Sir Patrick Kelly and Dr Azacio Gabriel Viegas, and national figures, Balgangadhar Tilak, Sir Phirozeshah Mehta and Vithalbhai Patel.[57]

Brief lives of early salon artists of Bombay

Two early portraitists

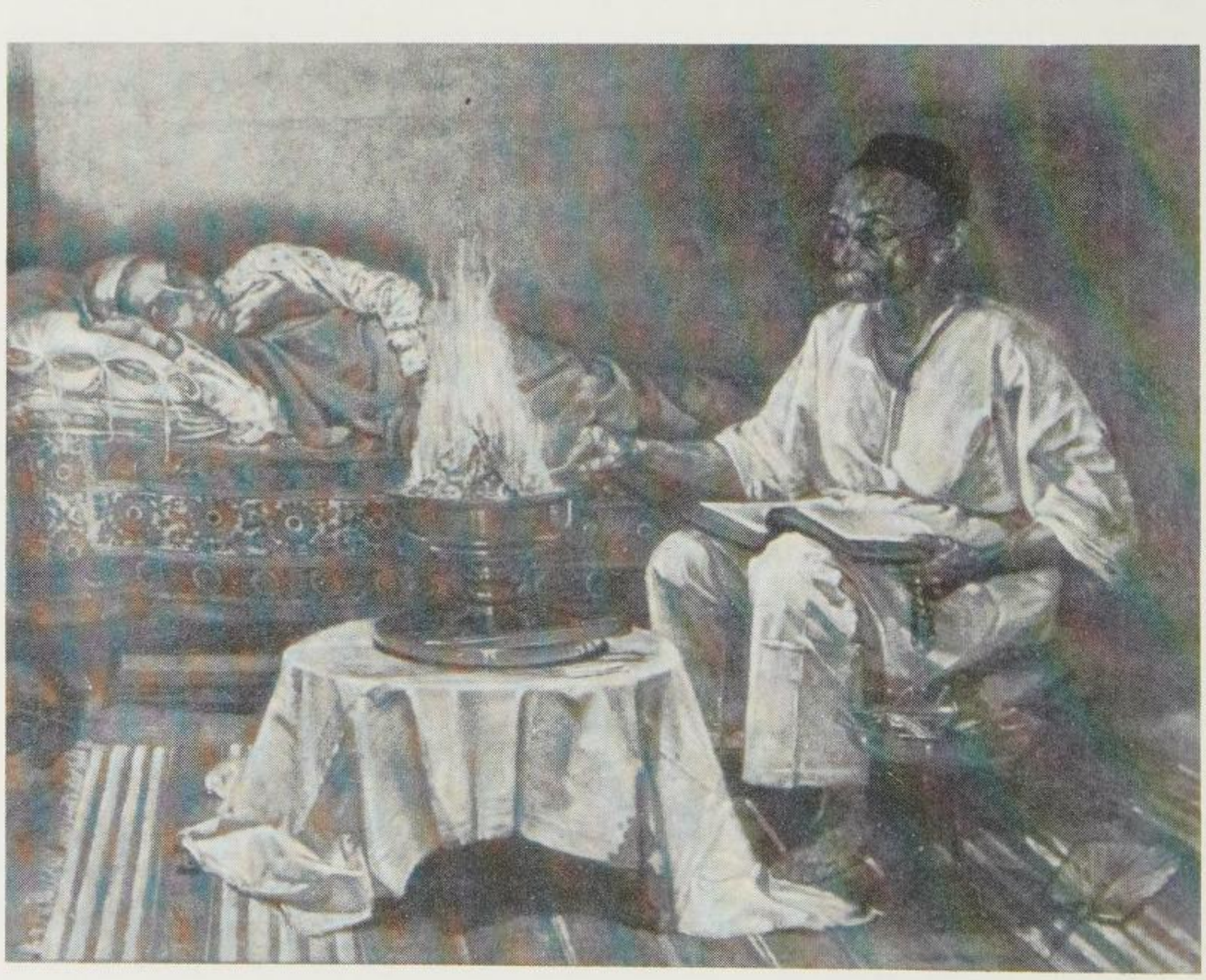
Pestonji Bomanji (1851–1938), a Parsi, was one of the first portrait painters from the Bombay art school. Pestonji wished to be a sculptor but since Kipling had already left, he came to Griffiths' notice for his work at Ajanta. In 1877 the art teacher recommended him to Valentine Prinsep, the visiting painter. Bomanji's apprenticeship was short-lived, to gather from Prinsep's account. 'I had brought a Parsee boy from Bombay, who came with a good character, but who turned out utterly useless. On Thursday I told him to pack up my new picture, particularly not to take my old ones', wrote the painter in connection with his visit to Gwalior. But the confused lad had totally misunderstood his instructions. Prinsep continued,

> Imagine, then, my horror at finding that my brilliant Parsee had left my new picture, and only brought the old one covered in dust, and sunk in! I confess I lost my temper . . . and cursed him audibly. If the Maharaja had not been there, I believe I should have kicked him, and run the chance of

> rupturing his spleen. Here was I, after ten hours' dark and several days travel, with my only chance of painting the great Sindia, and utterly unprepared! I was so angry I could not work even at my old study.[58]

This was no idle threat, for Prinsep was massive and of a towering height. This brief encounter with Prinsep, however, launched Pestonji into portraiture. In 1894 he became one of the first Indian teachers at the art school after Griffiths failed to interest the PWD in him. Later, Pestonji officiated briefly as Vice-Principal, the only Indian to do so before this century. When Bomanji set up as a portraitist, Griffiths regularly sent him students to give them experience in oil painting.[59]

No one was more conscious than Bomanji that exhibitions could make or break an artist. Encouraged by Griffiths, he featured regularly at shows around the country. The first Indian to win the top prize in Calcutta in 1879, his success was repeated at the International Exhibition (1883–4) in that city, where his *Parsi Lady Sewing* fetched a handsome price of Rs 500. In 1889, at the inaugural exhibition of the Bombay Art Society, his *Parsi Tiger Slayer* was judged 'the best exhibit by a native artist'. The *Times of India* described his portrait busts as 'realistic and warty', while the unglamourised realism of his work invited comparisons with Dutch realists.[60] In 1892, 1896 and 1898, he received favourable notices. His well-known work, *The Parsi Girl* (Fig. IV), painted in 1887, was first shown at the Society. Pestonji built up a lucrative practice with the backing of his own Parsi community (see, for example, Fig. 39). When



39 Pestonji Bomanji: *The Parsi Fire Ceremony*, oil

the *Times of India* planned a pictorial album of the luminaries of the empire, it turned to this leading portraitist.[61]

Manchershaw Pithawalla (1872–1937) was the second portraitist of the early period. From a village in Surat, he was an exception in having a humble background. Pithawalla was at the art school from 1888 to 1896 as a student of Griffiths. In 1894 he won his first award at the Bombay Art Society, the only artist to win three successive prizes there, including a gold medal in 1908. Pithawalla's *A Parsi girl* (Fig. 40) won high praise at Simla (1902). In 1905 he was invited to produce an album celebrating the flower of Indian womanhood (Fig. 41). The work was to be presented by the ladies of India to Queen Mary during the royal visit to India.[62]

40 M. F. Pithawalla: *A Parsi Girl*, oil

But to a colonial artist, nothing could compare with an exhibition in London. Pithawalla's one-man show opened on 11 October 1911 at the Doré Gallery. He had arrived in London after an obligatory tour of Italy, fulfilling his dream of gazing at European masterpieces at first hand. He showed twenty-five works produced during his short stay in London, including a view of the Serpentine (Fig. 42). His exhibition coincided with the imminent royal visit to India, when India held the public's attention. It was the first exhibition by an Indian artist, as noted by *The Graphic*. While *The Evening Standard* welcomed it for 'that reason alone',

41 M. F. Pithawalla: *A Parsi Lady*, oil

it added that Mr Pithawalla's work had 'definite merits of its own'. His observation of character was unforced, his poses 'natural' and his handling of figures in interiors tactful.[63]

The Globe felt that Pithawalla's visit helped complete his training and he was 'not above showing copies of several pictures in the National Gallery, Furse's Diana of the Uplands, and Millais' Northwest Passage, for instance . . .'. He had also sketched the coronation procession at Hyde Park but 'the artist's best work [was] that accomplished at home, upon sitters of his own nationality, especially the late K. R. Cama, a grey-bearded old gentleman clad in a violent robe and turban . . . With ladies [he was] less successful, notably when he [chose] a broader painting of dress and accessories'.[64] The Parsi, Sir Mancherji Bhowanagree, the second Indian to be elected a member of Parliament, threw a reception in the artist's honour. Birdwood disclosed that, apart from a few of the very best, he would prefer Pithawalla to any British portrait painter. The President of the society of British watercolourists graciously suggested that in quickness of capturing a likeness the Indian had scarcely a rival in Britain.[65]

42 M. F. Pithawalla: *The Serpentine*, oil sketch produced in three hours shown at the Doré Gallery, London, 1911

The lonely furrow of Abalal Rahiman

Abalal Rahiman's life (c. 1860–1931) was a painful contrast to the worldly success of the previous two artists it is a cautionary tale of the failure to take advantage of the new cultural institutions, such as art societies. A sadly neglected figure, Abalal seldom showed even in Bombay. He remained dependent on the appreciative, but limited, patronage of the Maharaja of Kolhapur. In this isolation, his art languished.

Abalal learnt Quranic illumination from his father, who worked as a clerk for the Kolhapur state. He also gained experience with local gold- and silversmiths, which in later life helped supplement his meagre income. As a young boy, Abalal was sent to have Persian lessons with the Indian interpreter at the English Residency. While waiting there, he killed time by drawing, which caught the attention of the Resident's wife. She persuaded the Maharaja to offer him a stipend to attend the Bombay art school in 1880.[66]

Abalal's early promise is evident in his school drawings, particularly in chalk (Fig. 43). School reports, which mentioned his precocious talent, expected him to follow in the footsteps of Pestonji. 'He shone at the school as a brilliant student', wrote his contemporary Dhurandhar, 'but adverse circumstances consigned him to oblivion. Otherwise he would have basked in limelight as a leading artist'.[67] It was his mother's sudden death in 1887 that removed him from cosmopolitan Bombay. All he carried back to Kolhapur was his brief painting experience with Griffiths. The short stay in the city had however wrought changes in him. He returned a westernised 'bespoke' dandy, sporting a beard and gold-rimmed spectacles, an object of curiosity in Kolhapur, the first art-school-trained artist in the region.[68]

Today, Abalal is remembered for his miniature landscapes of the Kolhapur countryside. We are not sure when he turned to nature, for at the art school he displayed a sensitivity to portraiture (Fig. 44). A lack of portrait commissions and his Quranic upbringing, which frowns upon figure painting, may have turned him towards landscapes. The immediate factor was the tension between him and his stepmother. He was forced to leave home and settle on the outskirts of Kolhapur with only an anchorite for company. The seclusion aroused his curiosity about the minutiae of nature; he probed them relentlessly, thus laying the foundations of his 'miniature' landscapes. His unforced retirement from society was viewed by the people in Kolhapur as a sign of the romantic artist, by now an established *topos*. The artist did nothing to discourage it – an image reinforced by his lack of a steady income. He could not afford drawing paper, let alone paints, being reduced to using cheap pigments and scrap paper discarded by a nearby press. The kind-hearted Maharaja obtained a teaching job for him at Kolhapur technical school. He also sent a regular supply of food grains to the artist. However, Abalal's preoccupation with

his own creativity precluded him from teaching on a regular basis. The only regular work he did was as a court artist, recording shooting expeditions and formal state occasions, executing mythological pictures, and designing stained glass, metal and ivory objects. With his patron's death, however, abject poverty could no longer be averted.[69]

In the 1920s, the penultimate decade of his life, Abalal produced his

43 Abalal Rahiman: *Portrait of a Woman*, pencil sketch done at the art school, Bombay

mature works, the watercolour landscapes (though he showed a portrait at the BAS at this time). Unable to afford large surfaces, Abalal turned to small works (as small as 5″ × 7″). His knowledge of Quranic illumination stood him in good stead here. Being prone to depression, aggravated by financial difficulties, he is said to have destroyed most of his works. The surviving ones show concentration and an eye for detail.

44 Abalal Rahiman: *A Maratha Lady*, gouache, a late work possibly exhibited at the Bombay Art Society demonstrates his skill in portraiture

Above all, they display an intimate knowledge of the environment he loved.

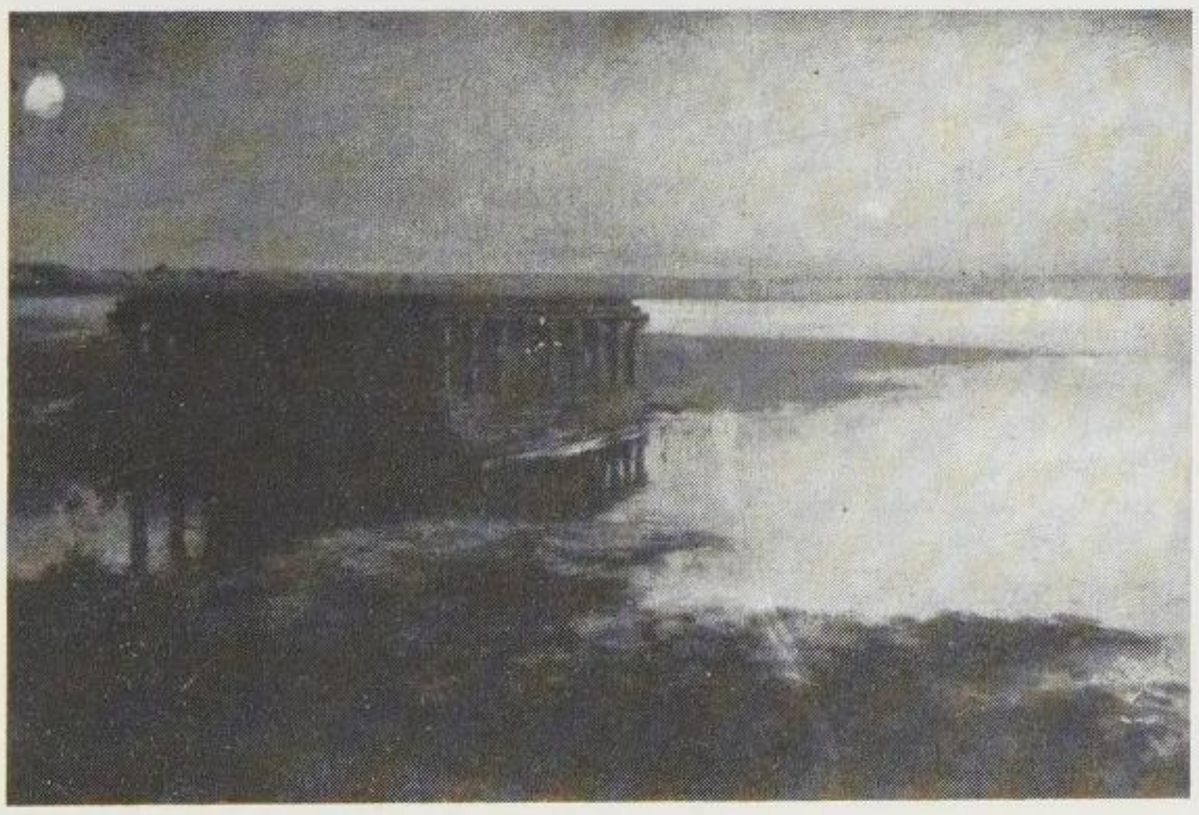
The best known of his probings of the Kolhapur landscape is the lake at Sandhyāmath at different times of the day (Fig. 45), which brought out the changing effects of light on water (Fig. 46). Abalal's 'impressionistic' works concentrated on light and texture by reducing intrusive details. He also developed composite landscapes with book illustrations as sources, such as Francis Younghusband's volume on Kashmir. Abalal's landscapes belonged to a growing genre in India in the wake of a new romantic affinity with nature. Raja Varma was the earliest Indian landscapist but there were also other noted landscape painters. Abalal himself admired Jamini Gangooly.[70]

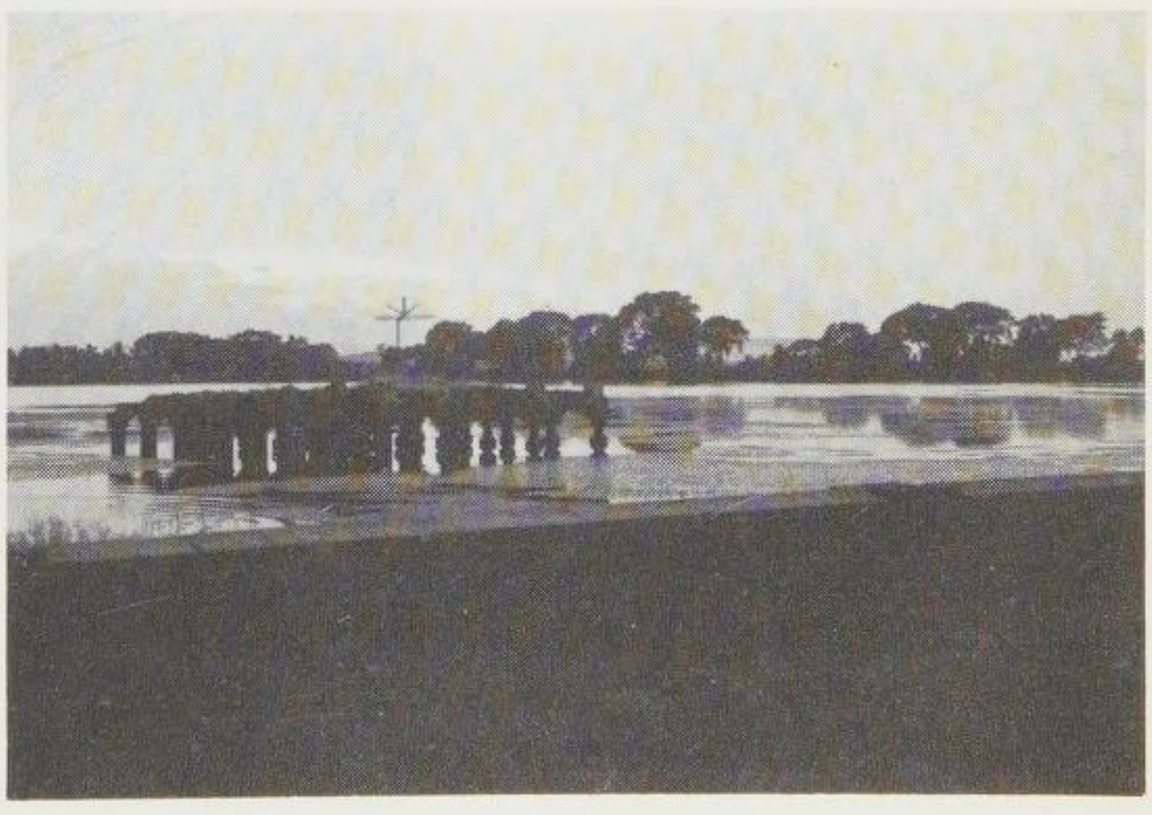
Abalal remained a bachelor, indifferent to material comforts. A controversial figure, Abalal's devotees saw him as leading a life of uncomplaining stoicism in pursuit of an ideal; his detractors dismissed him as a dissolute alcoholic.[71] The artist's autobiographical fragment plus the testimony of a small band of admirers help us to reconstruct his life. This unembroidered and cryptic document signals to us, with painful clarity, the unrecovered fees, outstanding bills and unaffordable painting materials. Mornings and part of the afternoons were reserved for painting; the post-prandial hours were spent outdoors in search of landscapes, although the actual works were finished at home (Fig. V). Several paintings were often started at once.[72] Abalal took up photography to supplement his income. Artistic matters are discussed in this fragment, including the meeting with a European painter, Miss Olivant, a guest of the Maharaja. On being shown by her how she mixed colours, Abalal remarked that her ideas were interesting, but he was too poor to put them into practice. The persistent theme is the absence of financial security.

A spirit of resignation informed Abalal's approaching death and the knowledge of not having fulfilled his promise. The importance of this

45 *Left* Abalal Rahiman: *Sandhyāmath*, watercolour

46 *Below* Photograph of Sandhyāmath





pioneer Muslim painter lies less in his few surviving works than in his romantic personality and a transcendental commitment to art.[73]

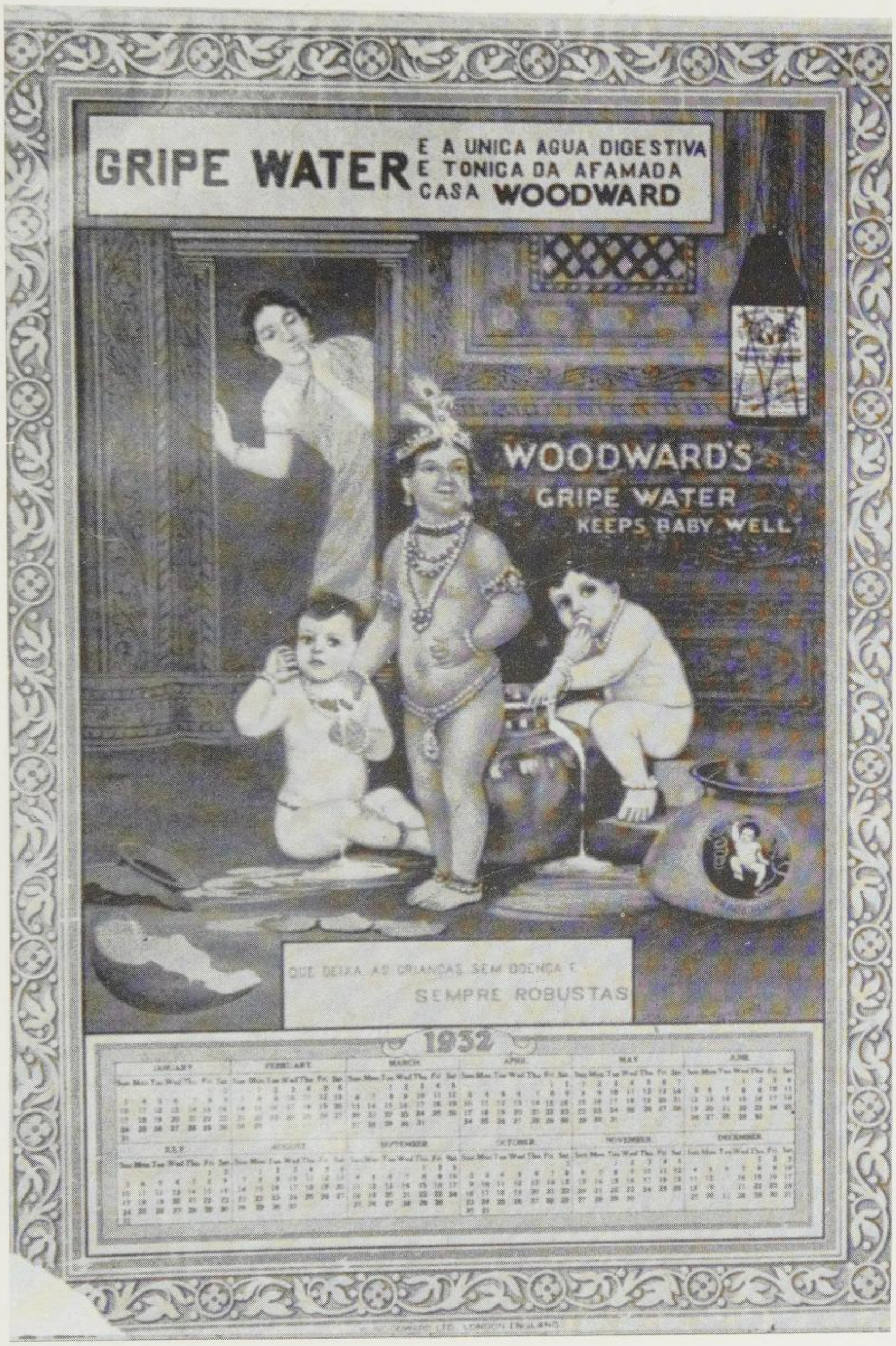
The worldly success of Mahadev Viswanath Dhurandhar

Unlike Abalal, his younger contemporary from Kolhapur, Mahadev Viswanath Dhurandhar (1867–1944), enjoyed a high social standing as artist and teacher, his personal ambition dovetailing into the Raj education policy. Dhurandhar was of the Pathare Prabhu caste, known for its artistic and literary proclivities. Unlike other groups in Maharastra, 'eager Prabhu and Brahmin lads had flocked to the new city' (Bombay), leading the field in professional skills.[74] Dhurandhar's encounter with European art was the stuff of romance. In 1890, smitten with the antiques at the art school, the young lad resolved to be an artist. In this he had his father's support. Highly ambitious, he impressed Griffiths with his habit of sketching after school hours when the average student was engaged in mundane activities. The Principal, Greenwood, also encouraged his single-mindedness.[75]

Dhurandhar's training at the school was interrupted by his father's sudden death, forcing him to think of earning a living. But Greenwood, who did not wish to lose a promising student, secured him a drawing tutorship at a local girls' school. Dhurandhar recalled how terrified he was to face a class full of giggling schoolgirls. In 1896, when one of the Indian teachers at the art school went on leave, he was given charge of the painting class. The government policy was to fill the lower echelons with the ablest Indians, while maintaining European control. Dhurandhar's abilities soon made him Headmaster, the highest post for a 'native' art teacher. He was to remain there most of his working life, though he often displayed greater experience and ability than his European colleagues. He eventually became the school's Director, thus fulfilling Greenwood's prediction. But this was in the last days of the Raj. More than the European principals, Dhurandhar provided the thread of continuity to the school, his career inextricably linked with its fortunes. His *Forty One Years in the Temple of Art* faithfully records the school's progress and standing in the community in its crucial years.[76]

Dhurandhar supplemented his income with printed illustrations (Fig. 47). In 1897 he illustrated Griffiths' article in the *Journal of Indian Art*.[77] The Maharastran was prominent among those who joined the expanding market in cheap prints. From the 1890s, a period that coincided with the postcard 'explosion' in the West, he designed postcards for a local manufacturer, the first Indian to do so. Ethnographic postcards, chiefly used by the British to write home, had succeeded the earlier ethnographic paintings. Dhurandhar's ethnographic illustrations were sent to Germany to be printed, then the most advanced country in printing. His *Ayah*

(nanny) (Fig. 48) was widely pirated.[78] Dhurandhar also did book illustrations, notably for C. A. Kincaid's *Deccan Nursery Tales* (1914) (Fig. 49) and Otto Rothfeld's *Women of India* (1924) (Fig. 50). He was a cartoonist to the Gujarati periodicals *Ārām* and *Bhoot* and produced for Kolhapur a watercolour series commemorating Maratha history.



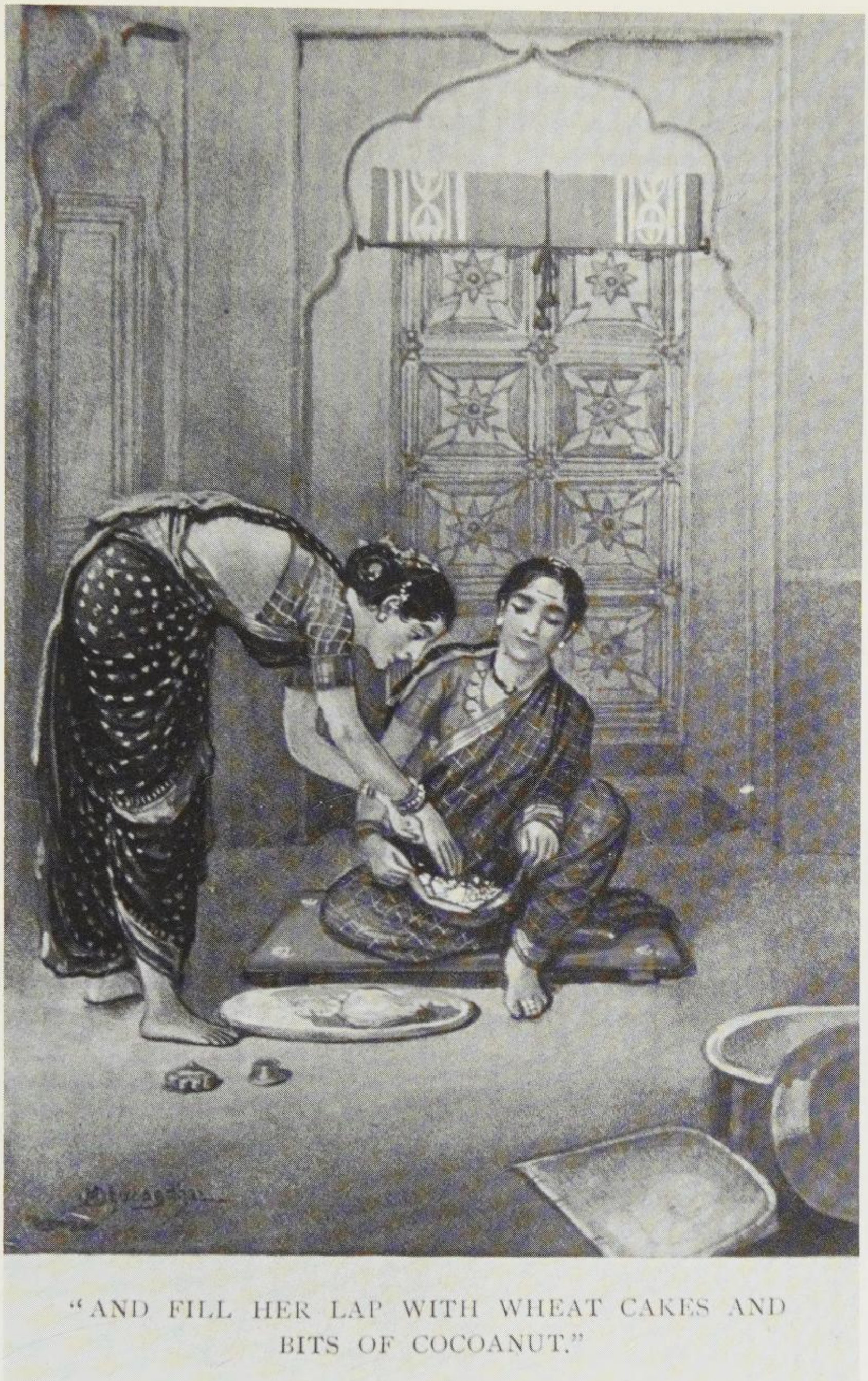
47 M. V. Dhurandhar: Poster for Woodward's Gripe Water

Dhurandhar, who could switch from miniatures to large ethnological paintings with ease (Fig. 51), progressed from posters and decorations for state occasions to the ambitious murals at the Secretariat in New Delhi.[79]

Dhurandhar's debut at the Bombay Art Society was in 1892 as a painting student. His proposed entry so impressed Greenwood that he personally submitted it to the Society. The drawing won Dhurandhar a prize of Rs 50, the first of the awards he won at the Society which made his reputation in the region. Dhurandhar described the day that he won the prize: he and eight other boys from the art school presented themselves in formal dress at the Secretariat, where they were allocated seats in the gallery. The exhibition was opened by the Governor and graced by the presence of dignitaries. A greater honour came his way three years later. With his oil, *Have You Come Laksmi?* (Fig. 52), based on a Hindu religious ceremony, he became the first Indian to win the Society's gold medal. Dhurandhar was a regular prizewinner at shows around the country, including the Madras Fine Arts Exhibition and a number of industrial exhibitions.[80]

Young Dhurandhar's fascination with *Venus de' Medici* and *Apollo Saurochthonos* had drawn him to art; figure painting remained a lifelong passion with him, though a private one. Dhurandhar continued to produce nudes even as a teacher, though models were not easily available. Like many other colonial artists, he mostly relied on prints and photographs, and sent regularly for English books on figure drawing as well as Parisian photographic studies of the nude, commonly used by western artists. It was in the 1920s that regular drawings from undraped figures were introduced at the school by Gladstone Solomon (Fig. VI). Even then

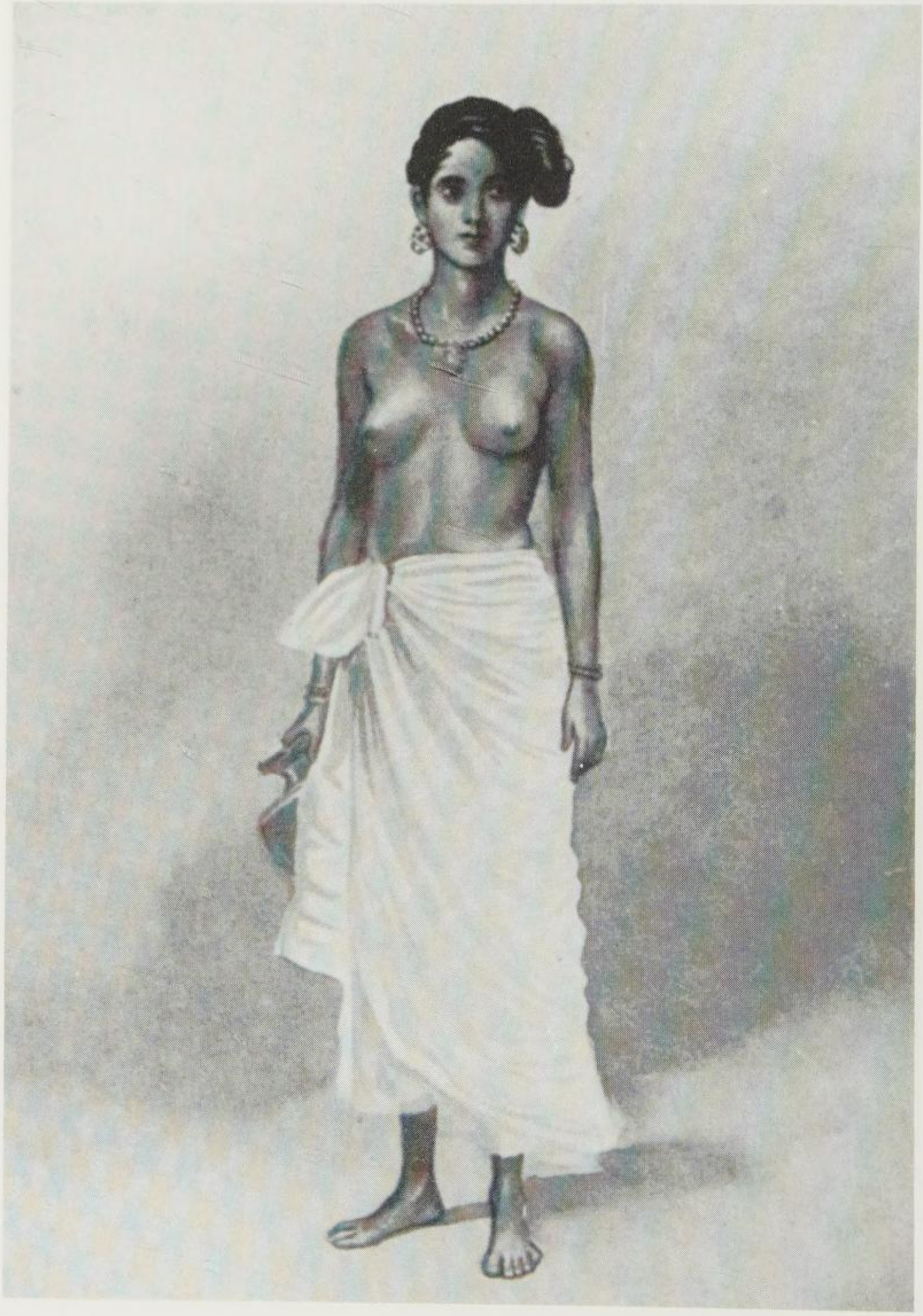
48 M. V. Dhurandhar: *Ayah*. Postcard designed by him



"AND FILL HER LAP WITH WHEAT CAKES AND BITS OF COCOANUT."

49 M. V. Dhurandhar: *And fill her cup with wheat cakes and bits of coconut*, Kincaid, *Deccan Nursery Tales*

Dhurandhar never ceased to use photographs as a source for figure work. This constant scrutiny of the human form gave him the confidence to produce large-scale figures for his murals. There is the touching story that during his visit to Paris in the thirties he immersed himself in painting from the nude model.[81]



50 M. V. Dhurandhar: *Kerala Beauty*, Rothfeld, *Women of India*

The Rembrandt of the East; Samuel Rahamin RA; A. H. Muller

Antonio Xavier Trindade (1870–1935), nicknamed 'the Rembrandt of the East', was born in Goa of Catholic parents. On his father's death, he emigrated to Bombay to earn a living. After graduation, he assisted in tinting photographs for the studio of Raja Deen Dayal, the leading Indian photographer, which had opened in Bombay in 1896. Photographic studios turned to art graduates as the demand for tinted photographs grew. Trindade did not remain long with Dayal, for his prospects at the art school were good. Undoubtedly talented, the Raj policy of offering incentives to Christians and children of mixed race also worked in his favour.[82]

Soon after he joined the school, the superintendentship of the Reay Workshops fell vacant. Trindade was chosen for the job instead of Dhurandhar. The Maharastran's fortunes had suffered a temporary eclipse, possibly because the new Principal, Cecil Burns, viewed him with suspicion. Trindade specialised in portraits such as the striking *Hindu Girl* (Fig. VII), which supplemented his income from teaching. He turned to sentimental interiors, landscapes and nudes in later years (Figs 53, 54). His *forte* was intimate domestic scenes featuring his wife and daughters, such as the prizewinning *Flora* (1920) (Fig. 55). A Catholic, Trindade was unique among Indian artists in treating Christian subjects (Fig. 56). The most moving among these was the *Ecce Homo*, painted on the eve of his death following the amputation of his gangrenous legs.[83]

51 M. V. Dhurandhar: *A Hindu Marriage Ceremony*, a many-figured watercolour composition (1908)

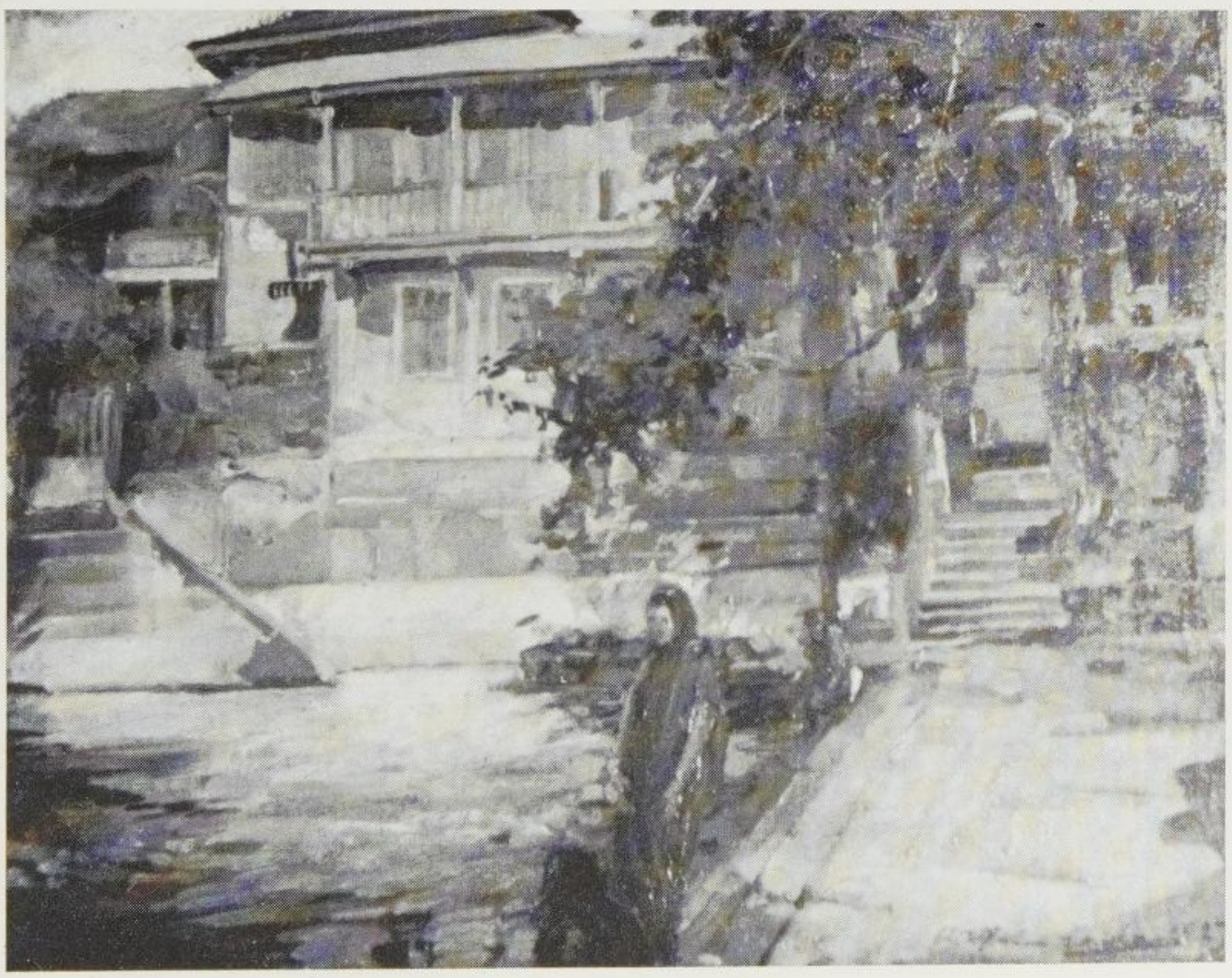
Archibald Herman Muller's (1878–1952) father, a German Protestant from Cochin, had married an Indian Catholic. Muller went to the Madras art school, where he had dazzled with a memory drawing at the admission test. This exercise was highly regarded by the teachers of the time. After graduation, Muller worked briefly as an assistant in his brother's photographic studio in Madras. He then tried his luck in various parts of India, ending up in Bombay in 1910, the accepted haven of westernisers. The next year, he won the Bombay Art Society's top award in painting

52 M. V. Dhurandhar: *Have you come Laksmi?*, oil, Bombay Art Society gold medal, 1895

with his *Princess Giving Gift to A Brahmin Boy* (Fig. 57), a work inspired by Ravi Varma's famous painting on a similar theme of charity (Fig. 58). But this did not lead to a steady income. A joint painting class with another artist fell through, and Muller was reduced to giving private lessons in painting in his small apartment. When the First World War broke out, because of his part-German background, he had the choice of internment or joining the volunteer reserve force. He chose the latter, gaining popularity with his deft sketches.[84]

Early in this century, Muller responded to nationalism by combing the *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* for inspiration. His historical narratives were based on the study of the nude, a genre that demonstrated skills in naturalism. Yet so strong was the grip of anti-naturalism in this period, that he felt impelled to make two watercolour versions of a *Rāmāyana* scene: a 'naturalistic' one and another in a 'flat, linear style' of orientalist inspiration. The following are his most important history paintings: *Gaṇgā's Descent into Pātāla* (Fig. VIII), *Sakuntalā at Duśyanta's Court*, *The Prediction of Prince Siddhārta*, *Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna at Kurukṣetra*, *Draupadī's Vastraharaṇ*, *Ulupī and Arjuna* and *Uṣā's Dream*. He also treated a nationalist theme of Maharastran inspiration: the Hindu hero Shivaji imprisoned in the Agra Fort by the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb (Fig. 59). The strength of Muller's paintings lay in a sure knowledge of human anatomy and a fluid and elegant deployment of multiple figures. The assurance of his figures, especially in sketches, is hard to explain in view of

53 A. X. Trindade: *Nude*, oil, on Dhurandhar's use of the same model, see colour Fig. VI



54 A. X. Trindade: *Landscape*, oil

his training at the craft-oriented Madras art school. It must be added however that unlike his sensitive drawings some of the paintings verged on a 'sugary' treatment worthy of Cabanel (Fig. 60).[85]

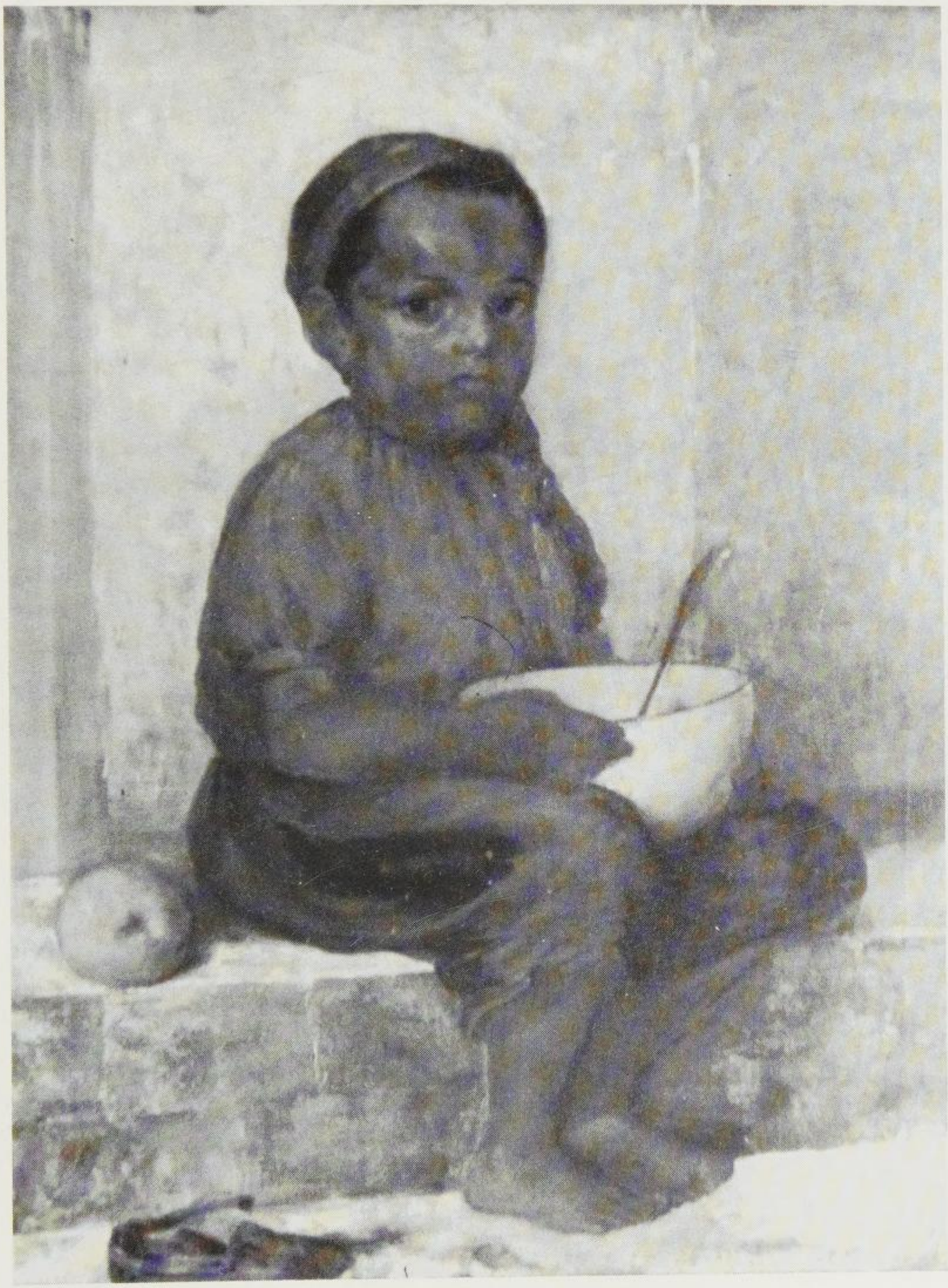
Muller was yet another individualist who had a fierce belief in artistic integrity. Once when a client brought back one of his paintings to be altered according to his wishes, the starving artist preferred to return his fees rather than accede to his demand. Another time, the wife of the Governor of Bombay expressed an interest in one of his works at a BAS exhibition. But Muller did not allow her to buy it, because the work had already been promised to a friend. Nor did he make another copy for fear of soliciting her favour. On yet another occasion, being upset by a patron's insensitivity, he tore up the painting in front of him.[86]

Poverty finally drove Muller to take employment under the Maharaja of Bikaner in 1922. His assignment was to record hunting trips of the ruler. There was no question of the prince not admiring his talents, but the duties proved onerous. Muller soon gave them up, for he needed time for his large figure compositions. His return to Bombay was followed by a hasty marriage, rather late in life, to his young niece, and by mounting financial difficulties. In 1928 his work won yet another BAS award. But

55 A. X. Trindade: *Flora*, oil, gold medal, Bombay Art Society, 1920: the subject his wife

ironically he could not even afford to take his own family to the exhibition. Having no other alternative, since Muller now had a family to feed, he returned to Rajasthan as the state artist of Jodhpur. He lived beyond 1947 to see India independent.[87]

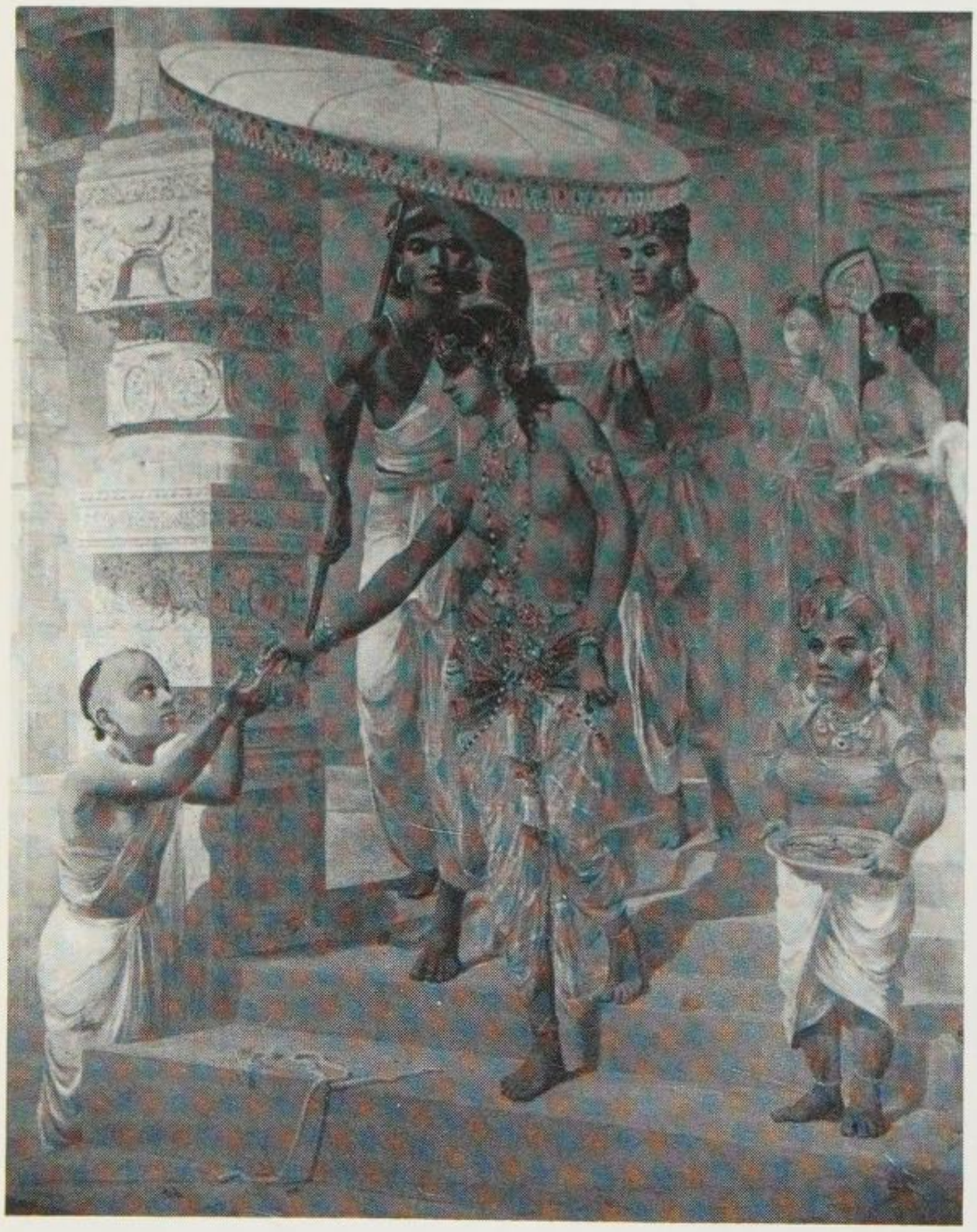
Samuel Rahamin (1880–1965) belonged to the Bene Israel community of Pune. After a period at the Bombay art school, he left for London to study under academic artists Solomon J. Solomon and John Singer Sargent, the leading society painter. The second Indian student at the Royal Academy, he was preceded by the Parsi, Rustam Siodia (Fig. 61).

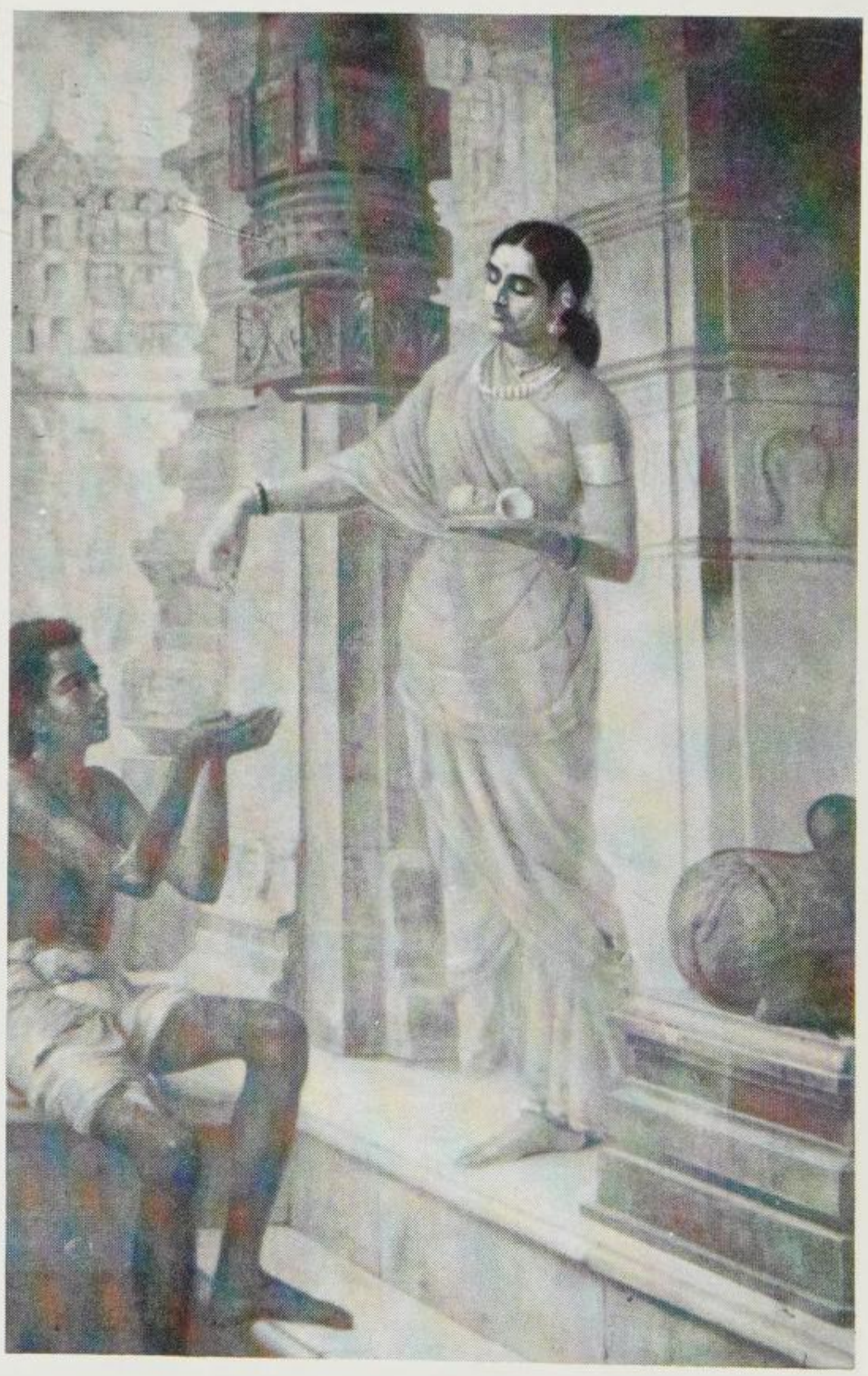


56 A. X. Trindade: *A Little Boy*, oil

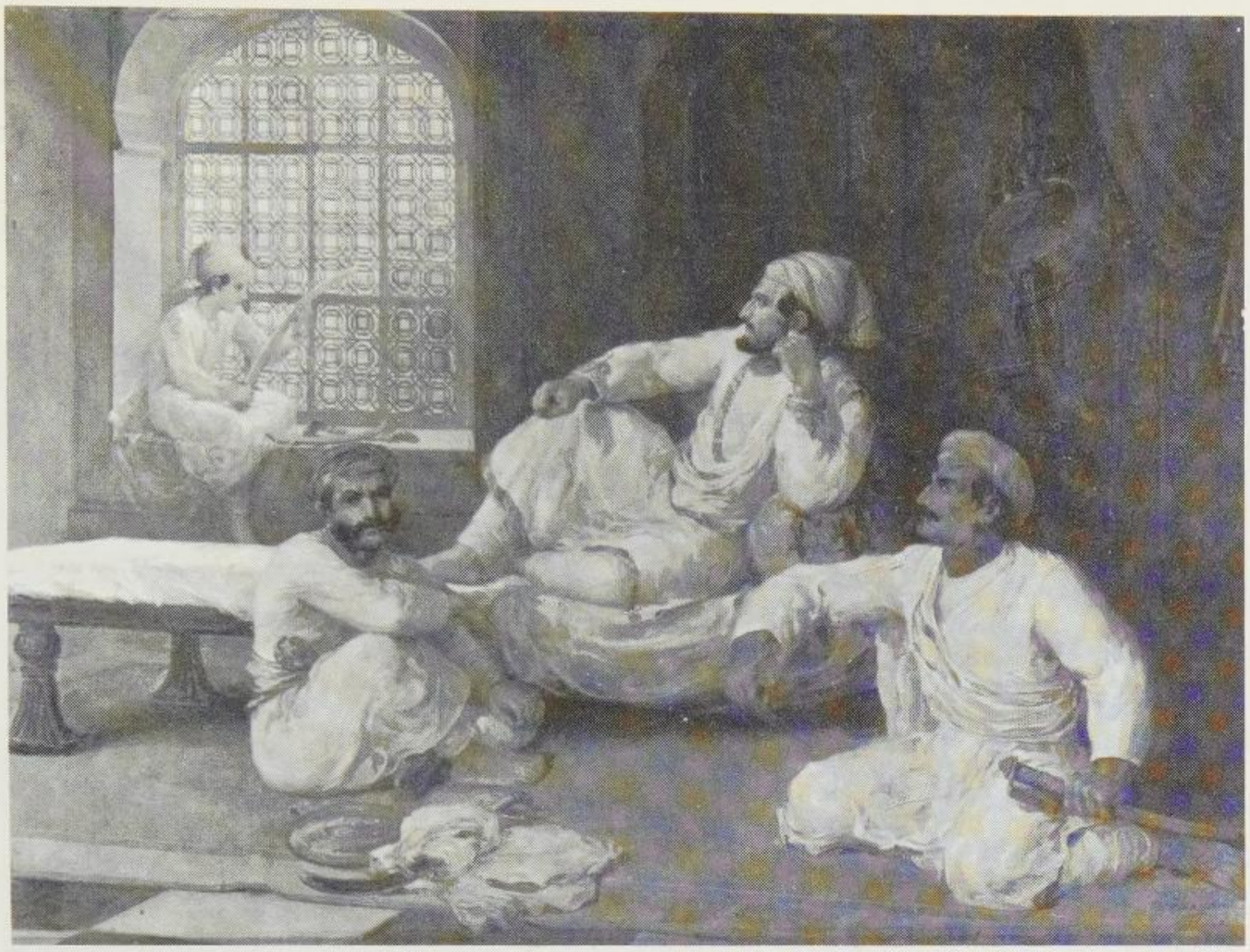
Rahamin exhibited at the Academy in 1906. On his return to India, Rahamin became court painter and art adviser to Baroda (Fig. 62). Five accomplished oil portraits of the Gaekwad family were executed between 1908–18.[88] In 1914, he held his first one-man show at the Goupil Galleries in London and showed at Arthur Tooth's in 1925. He was actively promoting his own works as late at the thirties, with a show at the Arlington Galleries in 1935. The Jewish artist had the distinction of being the only Indian to have works in the Tate Gallery. Rahamin's exalted self-image led Dhurandhar to comment sarcastically, 'There is no need to discuss his work. He is an artist and a writer, and considers himself a genius'.[89] An inextricable and colourful part of the Bombay art scene, the story of his conversion to nationalist 'orientalist' art is related later (ch. 9).

57 A. H. Muller: *Princess giving Gift to Brahmin Boy*, oil, inspired by Ravi Varma's famous work (Fig. 58)





58 *Right* Ravi Varma: *Woman giving Alms*, oil

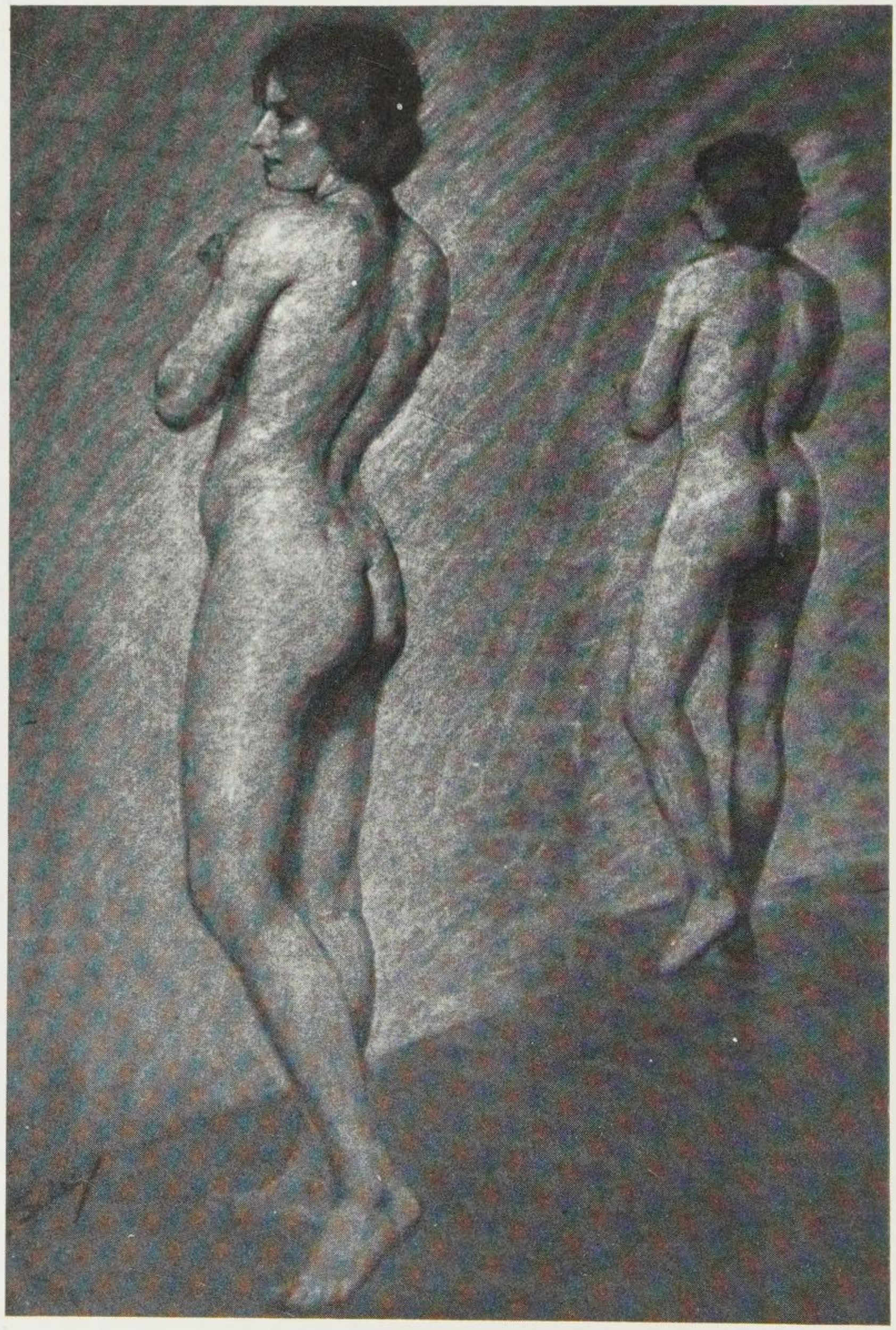


59 A. H. Muller: *Sivaji in Agra*, oil

60 A. H. Muller; *Ushā*, oil

The sculptor Mhatre's finest hour

Among early sculptors, Ganpatrao Mhatre (1876–1947) is associated with a romantic episode in the history of colonial art in India. His student work caused a sensation that catapulted him to a fame rivalling that of Ravi Varma. Originally, he enrolled to be a painter, but emerged as the first



61 R. Siodia: *Figures*, chalk drawings produced at the Royal Academy

major academic sculptor. The story of Mhatre's work, *To the Temple* (Figs 63, 64), shows the early promise of a gifted student that was never wholly fulfilled. Mhatre, a Prabhu caste, was encouraged by his father, who worked as a clerk in the army secretariat at Pune.[90]

Dhurandhar, his contemporary, has chronicled Mhatre's finest hour: a young painting student, who was working on a semi-life-size plaster figure, consistently absented himself from the school. Because of the high rate of student absenteeism, Principal Greenwood summoned him to explain himself. Mhatre was looking for this opportunity to give the teacher an unusual surprise. Before inviting him into the class, Mhatre placed his sculpture strategically so that it was clearly visible to Greenwood as he entered the room. The subject was a young Maharastran woman on her way to the temple, the work strikingly attractive in its easy grace and elegant proportions. Mhatre, who had produced it without any assistance from his teachers, never again matched this inspired work. On entering the room, Greenwood was somewhat taken aback by the piece, exclaiming: how could you produce such an excellent piece without training in sculpture?[91]

The Bombay Art Society's silver medal followed the public debut of *To the Temple* in 1896. An ecstatic review appeared in the *Times of India* (13 February 1896):

> Another chief feature of the exhibition is . . . a surprisingly good piece of sculpture by a young Hindu, G. K. Mhatre, a student of the School of Art. If any one can doubt whether a prophet can come out of Nazareth, let him go and see this figure of a Hindu girl going to the temple . . . this is the best piece of sculpture that has ever been done in India, and to any one who knows what comparatively limited opportunities this youth has had for studying sculpture, it will not appear too much to say that it is work of genius.[92]

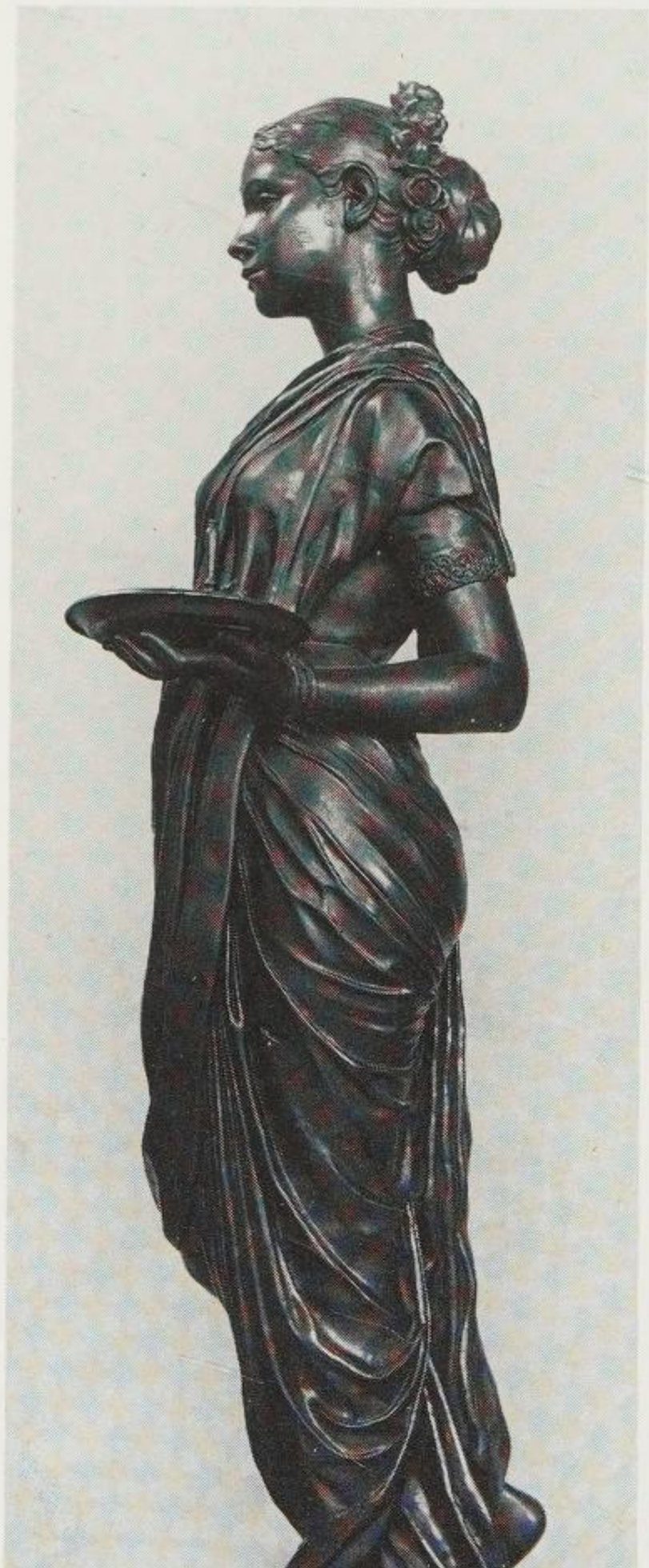
Ravi Varma declared it to be 'the most beautiful production of the kind I have even seen by a native'.[93] For Greenwood, there could be no better vindication of the school, since art schools had recently been threatened with extinction.

It may seem curious that India, where sculpture had been the most developed art since antiquity, had produced no salon sculptor until Mhatre. One guess is that English art teachers did not see the need to encourage sculpture. Hindu sculpture, they were convinced, was not high art in the Classical sense, and could therefore be taught in the decorative section. What caught them unprepared was Mhatre's triumph, which seemed to vindicate the Indian ability to absorb Greco-Roman precepts painlessly. Birdwood was promptly despatched a photograph of the work by Greenwood, for the support of this critic was vital. He was enchanted with the work, forming his impression from the photograph that it was a marble statuette, whose purity reminded him of Canova:

62 S. Fyzee Rahamin: *Maharani Chimna Bai II*, oil. Compare this portrait with Varma's earlier one (Fig. XVI)

> In its technique it is wonderful, and although I may be biased by my instinctive sympathy with an Indian artist, I believe myself to be moved solely by artistic emotion when, every time I look on the photograph . . . I derive from its contemplation an ever-heightened delight.[94]

Birdwood, who believed in self-taught genius, advised against subjecting him to discipline, for 'Mhatre, one sees at first glance, possesses this genius in sculpture, the most arduous, and, therefore the greatest of the Fine Arts . . .'.[95] He doubted if any living English sculptor with all his technical



63 G. K. Mhatre: *To the Temple*, plaster of Paris, profile

64 *Right* G. K. Mhatre: *To the Temple*, rear view

dexterity and refined ideals could rival such an unaffected expression of truth to nature as in this 'Diploma piece'. In technical skill, gracefully dignified pose and harmonious composition, the figure was 'Greek of the Greeks'.

An enemy of art schools, Birdwood ascribed its beauty to Mhatre's 'pristine Aryan instincts' and to a direct application of the chisel to the marble unhampered by hide-bound teaching. In an ecstatic climax, he declared, 'I know of no modern statue so completely attractive to me', urging westerners to profit from Mhatre's experience of working directly on the marble. Equally, he warned Mhatre's Hindu patrons against corrupting his Classical sensibility by making him treat the 'monstrous' Hindu gods. In a typical Birdwoodian vein, he ascribed the spiritual sweetness of the piece to the Christian Pax Britannica, while cautioning 'the primitive Aryan sculptor' against the corrupting powers of industrial society.[96]

Nothing pleased Greenwood more. Birdwood had unwittingly vindicated art school training, by presuming that 'the admirable character of his work is largely due to his . . . avoiding all contact with a school of art'.[97] Greenwood proceeded to disabuse him, 'I am therefore bound, in justice to the Bombay School of Art in general, and Mr Griffiths, the late Principal in particular, to state that Mhatre has been a student of this school since 1891, and is so at the moment'. *To the Temple* united higher western techniques with the Hindu sentiment. The young man's 'Greek' spirit had been awakened by his exposure to the antique collection at the school. The Director took melancholy satisfaction from the fact that of all people, Birdwood had been taken in. What he failed to mention was that the work was completed by a student, whose major subject was not modelling, without any guidance from the teachers.[98]

No matter, for Greenwood had Mhatre's best interests at heart. He appealed to Birdwood to support his proposal for sending the young artist abroad. Since

> the only education of Mhatre had been Western and . . . good as it may be, does not rank by any means with that of the best European sculptors in knowledge and technique, and therefore as there is no one here who can practically teach him anything more in that direction, it is a pity that while he is young and capable of further training . . . he should not have the best that can be got.[99]

But on ideological grounds, Birdwood refused to sanction government 'spoonfeeding' and recommended that such funds should be sought solely to augment private funding.[100]

The Maharastran student became an unwitting pawn among the warring factions. Poor Mhatre! Fired by the prospect of going abroad, he sent an urgent plea to Birdwood, begging his help in finding patrons in

England. He himself was too poor to visit Europe, 'the motherland of art'. But he was capable of handling marble, though *To the Temple* happened to be in plaster.[101] Once Birdwood entered the controversy, it inevitably spread among art teachers. R. F. Chisholm of Madras, implacably hostile to Birdwood, indignantly dismissed the work as that of a novice and made fun of the outpourings of Birdwood's effusive heart.[102] Birdwood, however, never lost interest in Mhatre. In 1899, chairing a meeting in London to introduce the Bengali painter Sashi Hesh, he did not omit to mention in passing: 'The Bombay School of Art has also produced a sculptor of the highest promise in Mr. Mhatre'. He implored Hesh to find him a generous benefactor.[103]

Plans to secure a passage to Europe for Mhatre were set in motion almost immediately after the news of his sculpture broke among the cognoscenti in Bombay. Greenwood may have had a hand in the *Times of India* notice that appealed to the local notables to fund Mhatre's training in Paris. He and another teacher, E. T. DeClosay, gave open testimonials to Mhatre in his search for finance.[104] Failing to move wealthy Indians, Greenwood decided to appeal to the generosity of British art lovers. In 1897, details about Mhatre were sent out to the *Magazine of Art*, partly to inform the British public of the successful transplant of high art in the empire. It 'is with pleasure that we publish the illustration . . . to show the development of Sculptural Art in India . . . [it is] quite a new departure from the usual grotesque and unidealised work of native sculptors, and bears high testimony to the influence and teaching of the School of which Mr J. Griffiths is the headmaster', stated the magazine. It further declared that as there was 'no interest or appreciation of this kind of Art among the wealthy Hindus . . . we [ask] our patrons of Art to afford Mr Mhatre the necessary facilities to complete his work'.[105] Mhatre was the first Indian to appear in this leading magazine of salon art in Britain.

65 G. K. Mhatre: *Sarasvatī*, plaster of Paris

The last resort for Mhatre's champions was the government. Discreet overtures were made in 1896, with a photograph of the piece sent to the Governor of Bombay. In 1899, the Director of Public Instruction forwarded the art school's entreaties to the provincial government and to Calcutta, hinting at the need for funds to transfer the piece to marble. The attached resolution reminded the government that it was an ideal example of 'the influence of Western training judiciously applied to Oriental Art'. Acknowledgements were received from Lord Curzon's office and from the Governor of Bombay, but the invitation to finance Mhatre was politely ignored.[106] In 1899, the *Times of India* made a final plea on behalf of 'the most beautiful statue that was ever modelled in India . . . [it] stands in the vestibule surrounded by all well-known classical types of statuary, and holds its own among them'.[107] From distant Lahore, *The Tribune* (31 May 1900), a nationalist daily, roundly condemned the failure of 'native patronage'. As late as 1901, when the art teachers had given up, the

supporters of the sculptor launched a final appeal in the Bengali monthly, *Prabasi*, for help in sending Mhatre abroad.[108]

Nothing came of these efforts. In keeping with art school practice, Mhatre was offered a teaching post, which he declined in favour of an independent practice. In 1900 his sculpture, *Sarasvatī* (Fig. 65), was sent to the *exposition universelle* in Paris. It was unflatteringly described by a French critic as a symbolic statue of Saraswati, holding a guitar and playing some new imperialist ditty of Kipling's. An English crown sat precariously on her head like a pith-helmet. The combined weight of the two objects prevented her from recovering her graceful posture.[109] The international jury, which had been extremely generous with awards, felt otherwise. On 28 August 1900, Mhatre was informed of their award of a bronze medal and a Diploma of Honour to him.[110]

Cecil Burns, who succeeded Greenwood in 1901, proudly announced at his annual address to the school that 'Mhatre's work was exhibited among, and was criticised in comparison with, the works of the greatest sculptors of Europe and America'.[111] The school's *ex officio* patron, the Governor of Bombay, added in his speech: 'One of its [the art school's] most notable products in the higher branches of art is Mr. Mhatre, a young Hindu, whose statue "Saraswatee" which could bear comparison with the works of some of the greatest modern sculptors of Europe and America, has obtained an honourable mention at The world's exposition which is no small achievement . . .'.[112] The *Magazine of Art* reported the Paris triumph of Mhatre. It had been a bad year for English artists at the Paris exposition, who were victims of the prevailing frost in Anglo-French relations.[113]

Mhatre's next triumph was at the Delhi exhibition to mark the Imperial Durbar of 1903. The catalogue made a point of mentioning his studio run 'on the most approved European lines'. The works included *To the Temple*, and a new composition, *Pārvatī as Śabarī* (Fig. 66). Although described as smacking more of Paris than the East, *Śabarī* received the highest award.[114] In 1904 the Maharastran received a public commission for an over-life-size memorial statue of Queen Victoria. The plaster model had a preliminary viewing at the Bombay Art Society in 1905. Completed in 1910, the work was duly installed in Ahmedabad. The powerful piece was inspired by the standard memorial sculptures of the Queen in Britain and the empire. In Carrara marble, it shows the Queen seated, wearing an intricate garment of lace and embroidery and holding the symbolic sceptre and orb. Other monumental works of Mhatre were a seven-foot-high figure of Ranade in Bombay and commissions from the princely states of Kolhapur, Gwalior and Mysore. Mhatre had established a foundry and built up an enviable practice in large statues. But even at the Wembley Empire Exhibition of 1924 it was his first work that stood for Bombay's unique success.[115]

66 G. K. Mhatre: *Pārvatī as Śabarī*, plaster of Paris

Early academic artists of Calcutta

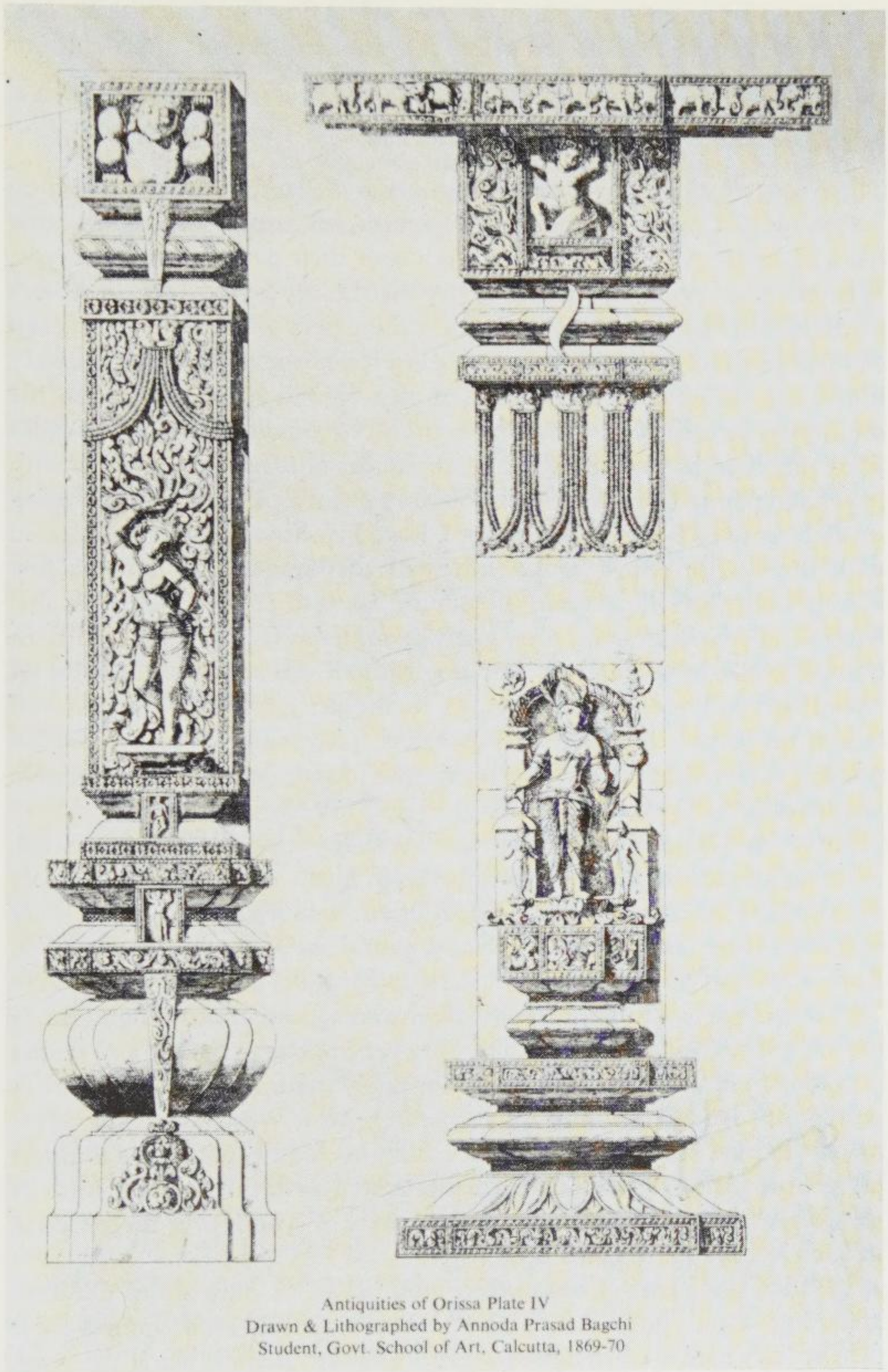
Two pioneer Bengalis

After a brief spell with a professional engraver, Annada Prasad Bagchi (1849–1905) enrolled at the Calcutta art school. His father had initially objected to his artistic ambitions because 'in those days people considered that profession a lowly one'.[116] When Bagchi enrolled in 1865, the art school contained an appreciable number of artisans; by the time he left, 'the number of boys with schooling and from respectable families was on the increase', noted the art magazine, *Shilpa Pushpānjali*.[117] Bagchi's studies of heads at the 1873 Calcutta exhibition were praised by Temple for 'remarkable merit and originality, very creditable to Bengal and Bengalees . . .'.[118] The following year, the artist 'carried off the gold medal offered . . . for the best painting by a native of India' at the Madras Fine Art Exhibition.[119]

Even though Bagchi became a portrait painter of the affluent, today he is remembered more as a graphic artist. His student work as the illustrator of Rajendralala Mitra's *Antiquities of Orissa* (1869–70) (Fig. 67) helped to create his reputation. He graduated in 1876 but was soon engaged to teach lithography at the school after the departure of its European teacher. The Bengali subsequently rose to be Headmaster, some years before Dhurandhar in Bombay. As an up-and-coming graphic artist, he designed the main certificate for the Calcutta exhibition of 1883. In 1885–6, the acting Principal Olinto Ghilardi described him as a foremost Indian artist, who was 'ignorant of prejudices'. Ghilardi praised him again the next year: 'the institution is largely indebted to him for various artistic productions which have contributed to raise the fame of the Calcutta School of Art'.[120]

In a period of feverish cultural activity, young Bagchi's energies were not confined to the school. He brought out *Shilpa Pushpānjali*, the first Bengali art magazine, and possibly the first Indian art magazine. Bagchi embellished the paper with lithographs and wood engravings, a practice that continued until the half-tone process replaced older techniques. Above all, in providing a forum for aesthetic discussions, *Shilpa Pushpānjali* gave a boost to artistic nationalism. The ambitious graphic artist soon moved on to a commercial venture, the Calcutta Art Studio, which became a local byword for colour lithography.[121]

Bamapada Bandopadhaya (1851–1932) was younger than Bagchi. Disappointed with the oil painting course at the school, he apprenticed himself to an early art graduate, Pramathalal Mitra. With the arrival of a German artist, Karl Becker, in Calcutta, Bamapada became his assistant to gain further experience. At the 1879 exhibition in the city he received accolades with his prize-winning *Juggler and Monkey*. In 1881, as different regions of India became more accessible, Bamapada decided to seek his fortune outside Bengal. Starting as a painter of the wealthy in Allahabad,



Antiquities of Orissa Plate IV
Drawn & Lithographed by Annoda Prasad Bagchi
Student, Govt. School of Art, Calcutta, 1869-70

67 A. P. Bagchi: a page from *Antiquities of Orissa*, lithograph

he reached as far north as Lahore before settling down in Calcutta in 1884. Bamapada regularly collected prizes at winter exhibitions in Calcutta.[122]

The landscapes of Jamini Prokash Gangooly

The aristocratic Jamini Prokash Gangooly was a landscapist of distinction (1876–1953). Closely related to the Tagores, his artistic inspiration came from his uncle Abanindranath, though later their paths were to diverge. When he was very small, he tells us, he once boldly finished one of Aban's landscapes in his absence. 'Wonderful was the fiery glow of the setting sun and its exquisitely delicate reflection glittered in the river. But the lovely tints were fading fast, and I felt tempted to add some touches to the unfinished picture of my uncle's', reminisced Gangooly later.[123] Somewhat surprised by Jamini's daring, Abanindranath encouraged him with paper and paint. The twelve-year-old boy decorated the text welcoming the Governor of Bengal at this school. Lord Lansdowne, who was pleased with this boyish effort, spoke words of encouragement. Jamini's first lessons were with the veteran oil painter, Gangadhar Dey. Close in age, Jamini and Abanindranath took instructions from C. G. Palmer, an artist trained at South Kensington. The Englishman was active in Calcutta art circles and had presented his works to the art gallery.[124] Jamini, who lacked his uncle's intellectual restlessness, painstakingly completed his training under Palmer, thereby laying the foundations of his impressive brushwork.[125]

Early on Gangooly moved into the India-wide exhibition circuit, winning awards regularly at exhibitions in Simla and Bombay, notably the Bombay Art Society gold medal in 1910. In 1902, he was the only Indian to enter landscapes at Simla, winning the Finlay prize with *Wet Banks of the Ganges*. *The Pioneer* enthused: 'Mr J. P. Ganguli exhibits some very charming paintings of Bengal river scenery, either moonlight, misty morning or evening "effects". They are very poetic in feeling and tender in colour and treatment'.[126] In 1904 Gangooly made his début in Bombay with more landscapes, including *Morning Mist*, which won the silver medal for oils. The *Times of India* hailed his landscapes as a genuinely indigenous vision of nature, which contrasted with the *déraciné* works of Bombay artists, including Dhurandhar, none of whom ever succeeded in striking a genuine Indian note.[127]

In 1907, the *Times of India* wrote pointedly not only about Dhurandhar, but about Pithawalla and Rustam Siodia as well: 'unless these gentlemen's names were there to testify to their pictures being the work of natives of India, they might have been taken for those of European painters. One seeks almost in vain for successors to those masters of miniature portraiture'.[128] Gangooly's *On a Cloudy Night* was singled out as capturing a typical view of nature and the peculiar quality of the Indian intellect. The *Times of India* did not mince its words:

> Mr Gangoly's picture, despite its poor and inappropriate framing, and the cruelty of surrounding it by landscapes painted with the fullest strength of the palettes . . . is one of most interesting pictures seen at any of the Society's Exhibitions since the collection of works by Mr Tagore was shown in 1904. It has the same decorative arrangement of line and harmony of colour, so much prized in the ancient Persian and Indian pictures. It lacks the jewel-like finish of those patient craftsmen, but has a poetry not always found in their productions.[129]

Times were changing, as were the opinions of the *Times of India*. The paeans to the landscapes of Gangooly and the phrase, 'the peculiar quality of the Indian intellect' indicate a growing ambivalence towards westernisation among the British. The original label of difference, 'the native artist', reappeared in a new guise in the wake of the orientalist art movement: instead of perfecting the alien western mode, Indian artists were better off producing works that reflected their own 'racial psychology' (see ch. 7).

One is not entirely convinced of a special 'Indianness' in Gangooly that the other painters lacked. Nor was his style particularly flat and 'decorative', as imagined by the *Times of India*. Perhaps it is hard to decide on the special Indian treatment of landscape. Even Mughal landscapes, the first in Indian art, were inspired by European art. And yet, not only had influential opinion decided in favour of Gangooly's Indianness to the detriment of the Bombay westernisers, but he also got on well with the orientalists, the avowed enemies of naturalism. This was partly because Abanindranath, the leader of the orientalists, still approved of him. In fact if we turn to *Prabāsi* of 1902, we notice that Gangooly was already established by the time Abanindranath was coming into prominence. While speaking on the landscapist, *Prabāsi* mentioned in passing that Abanindranath's paintings were due to appear in *The Studio* that year.[130]

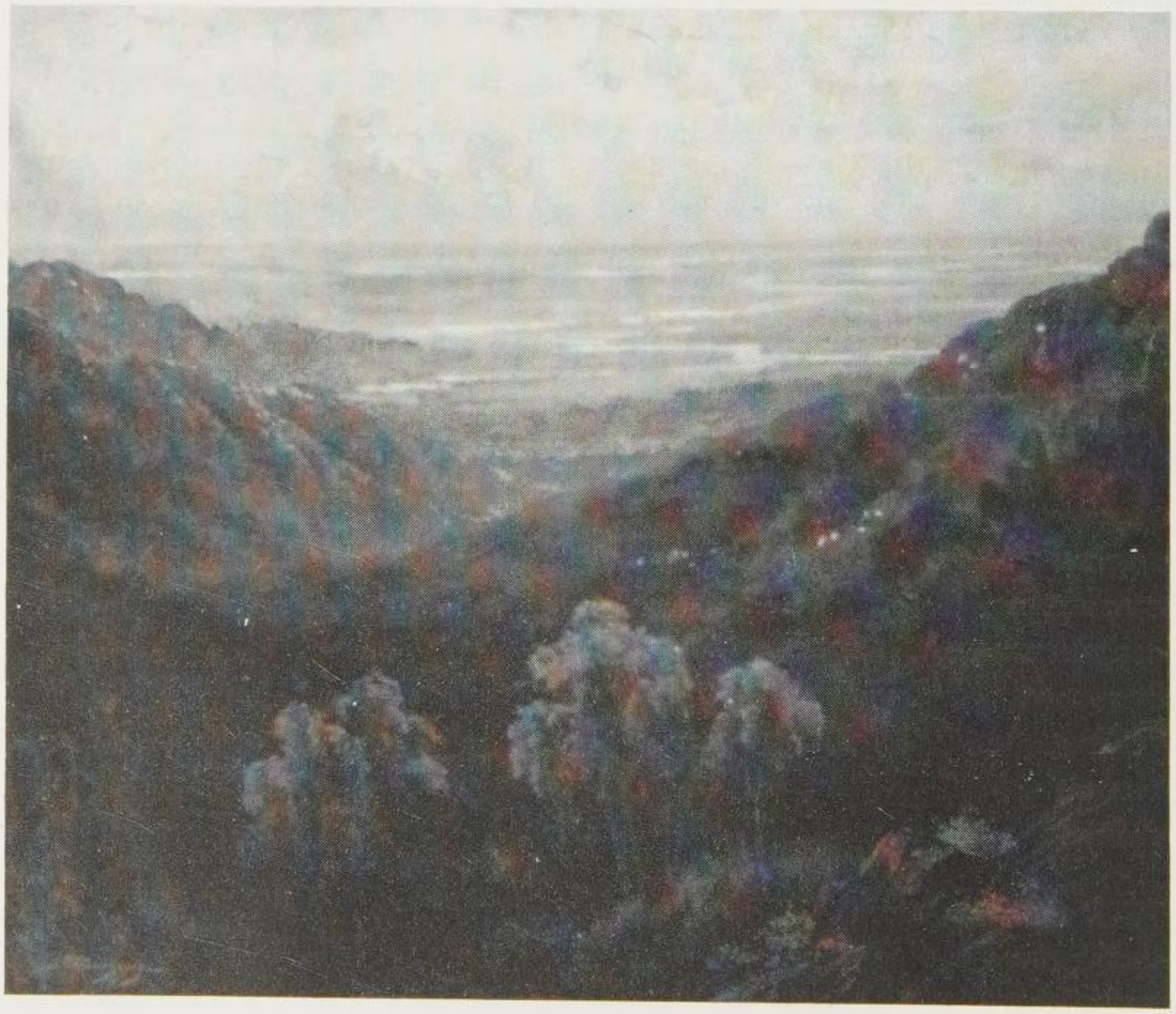
Gangooly continued to enjoy the confidence of *Bhārati*, the nationalist 'house journal' of the Tagores, even after academic art was jettisoned by Abanindranath. The landscapist for his part had turned to ancient literature as early as the 1900s, albeit in the manner of the 'olympians'. Rabindranath felt sufficiently moved by his painting based on *Kādamvarī* to write an essay on it. Even in 1909, Gangooly was promoted by *Bhārati* as a nationalist by virtue of his themes. The painter returned the compliment with *Virahī Yakṣa* (1909), whose theme and treatment paid homage to his uncle. Some months later, the journal carried his painting, *Yudhisthirer Mahāprasthan*, inspired by the last scene in the *Mahābhārata*. The canine companion on the Pandava king's last journey, one cannot help noticing, sports a 'post-epic' collar and band.[131]

In 1912, *Bhārati* decided to publish a long biographical notice on the artist. To forestall any queries about the small nationalist quotient in his work, extenuating circumstances were pleaded, albeit obliquely; even though he was an academic artist, the Indian themes justified his inclusion

in *Bhārati*. The description of his landscapes as a marriage of East and West tacitly appealed to the prognosis of the English newspapers. Gangooly's paintings betray the influence of Millet's elegiac mood and the twilight glow of his landscapes, as in *At the end of the Day*, or *Evening Prayer of Muslims*, in *Bhārati*.[132]

Gangooly won fame for his atmospheric paintings of natural scenery, the spectacular Himalayan mountain ranges (Fig. IX) and the series on the river Ganges in different moods. The works show a sensitive grasp of the drama, the variety of natural light and the rich colours of the Indian landscape (Figs 68, 69). Above all, they reveal the dedicated craftsman that he was. His painting, *Dusk at the River Padmā*, was acquired by the queen-consort of Vittorio Emmanuelle III of Italy; the artist was decorated by the Italian government in appreciation.[133]

It is not surprising that Gangooly found favour with those Bengalis that enjoyed academic art. In 1910, 1911 and 1916, Suresh Samajpati, the acerbic editor of *Sāhitya*, repeatedly praised his representational skill at the height of its feud with *Bhārati*. This was in spite of the fact that Gangooly was championed by the orientalists. Gangooly enjoyed the confidence of the Tagores until he was chosen as Deputy Principal of the art school in 1916, when a coolness sprang up between him and his uncle. Gangooly's appointment followed Abanindranath's resignation from the school after he was bypassed for the Principalship. The orientalists, who viewed this as

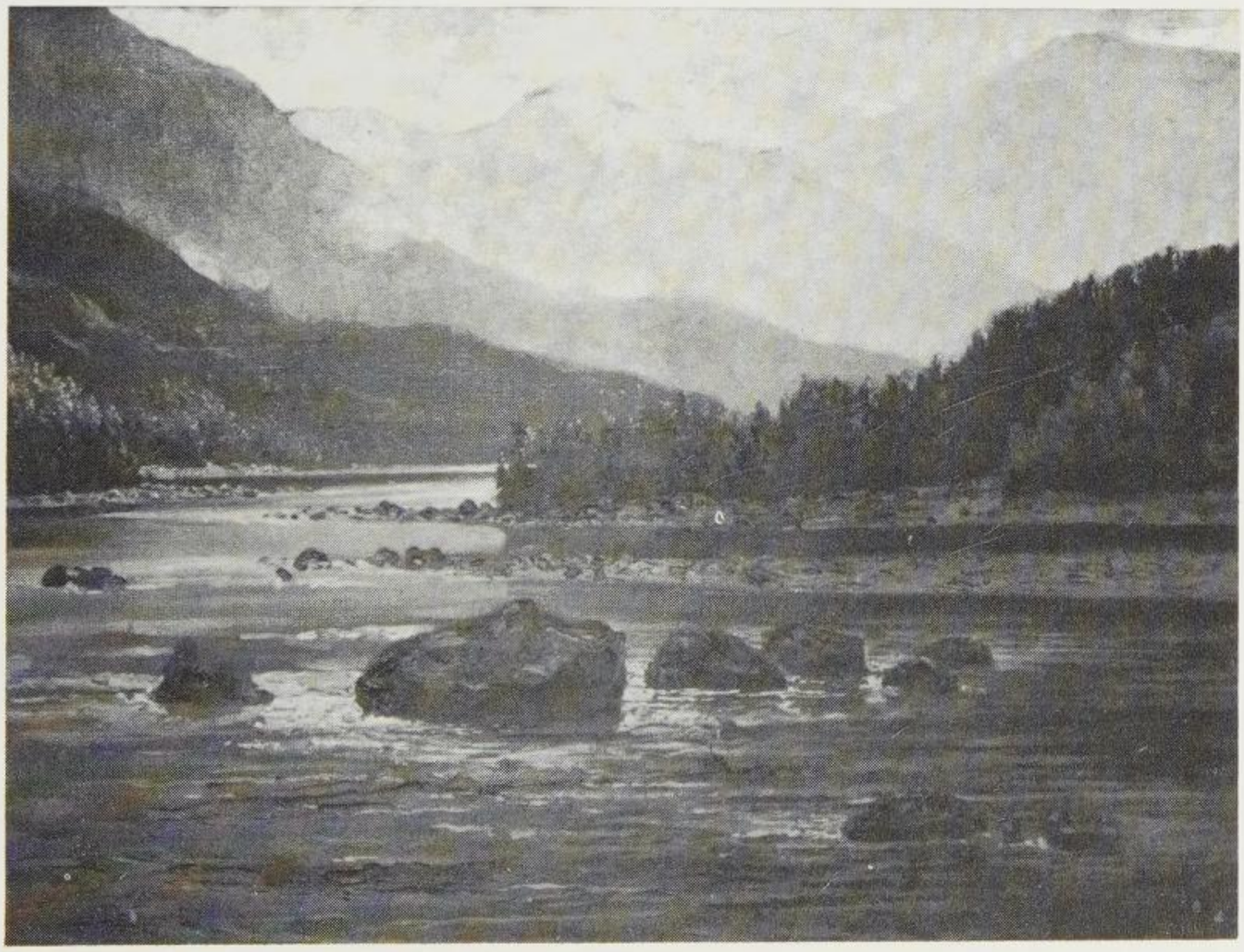


68 J. P. Gangooly: *Mountain Landscape*, oil

a snub to Abanindranath, were incensed that Gangooly accepted the post. Inevitably, the moment Gangooly entered the school, he became an unwilling mentor of the young westernisers who were trying to regroup against orientalism. Gangooly in turn was forced out of the school in 1928, a victim of the byzantine politics of Raj patronage. A retiring and mild-mannered man, Gangooly eventually returned to friendly terms with the Tagores. Indeed a reconciliation was patched up between uncle and nephew in 1942. In a 'Festschrift' for Abanindranath, he expressed mild regrets at having been unsympathetic to orientalism, which may have been a polite gesture made for the occasion.[134]

Bengali artist-pilgrims bound for Italy

The logical aim of an art student in India would be an advanced training in Europe. Because of the British connection, the normal destination of Indian art students – Kundanlal, Siodia, Rahamin, Navroji and Writer, to name a few – was London. Interestingly, Italy became for a while the avowed goal of artists in Bengal. Italian training was of course common in western countries, many of which, notably France, England and the United States, set up 'schools' in Rome where the prize-winning student could reside while imbibing Classical art. It was after the arrival of the Italian teacher, the Chevalier Olinto Ghilardi, at the Calcutta art school in



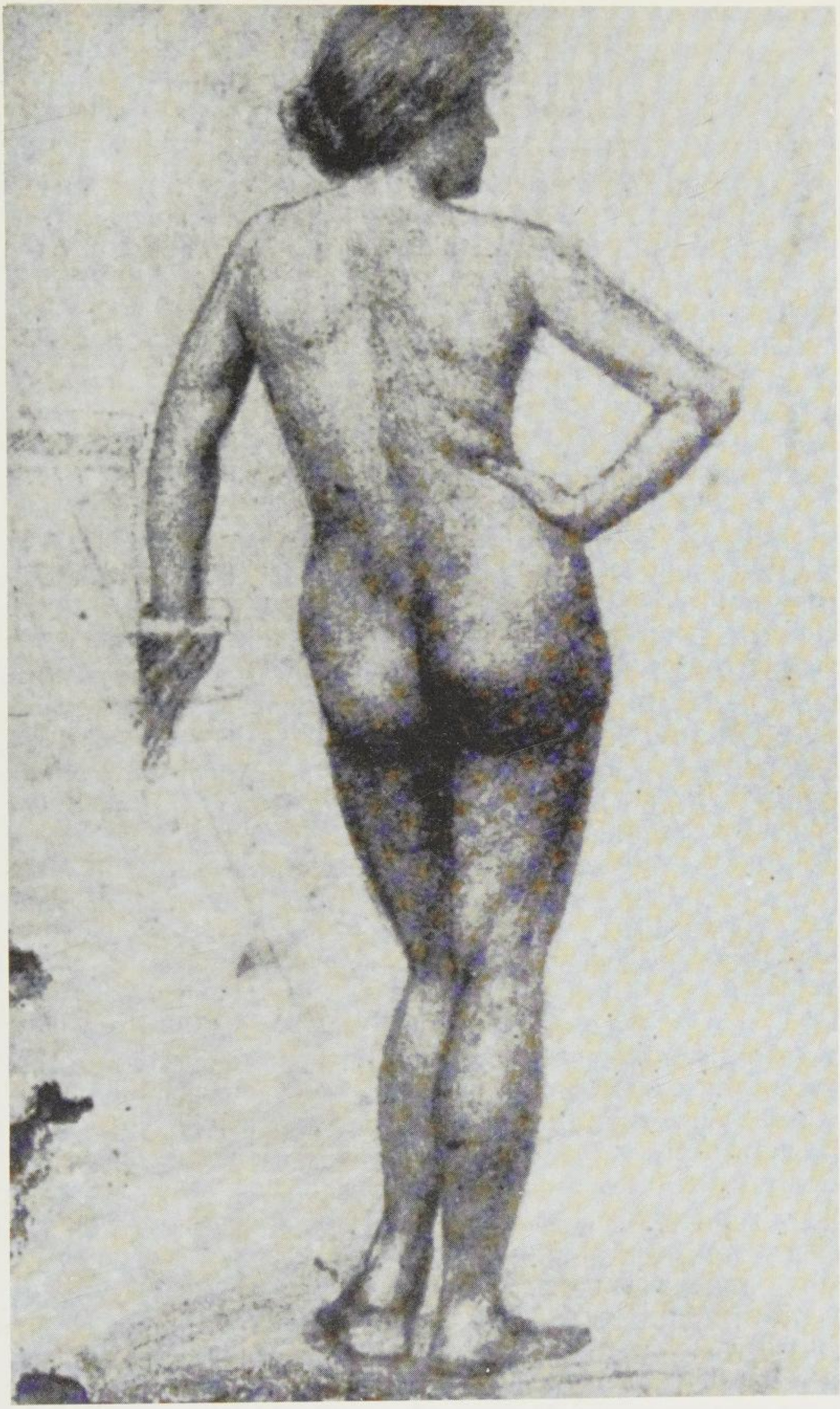
69 J. P. Gangooly: *Lake and Mountain Scenery*, oil

1886, that an Italian training became a possibility. The members of the Bharātiya Shilpa Samiti (1893) – Annada Bagchi, Jamini Gangooly, Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri and Abanindranath Tagore – debated the question of sending art students abroad. Ghilardi advised them and arranged for students to go to Rome.[135]

Of the celebrated Bengali trio bound for Italy, Rohini Kanta Nag and Sashi Hesh received an Italian art education. Theirs was the story of reaching the promised land amid hardships, to learn at the fountainhead of western art. Nag (1868–1895), who belonged to a well-to-do Brahmo family, was admitted to the Royal Academy in Rome on the personal intervention of the Italian prime minister.[136] In 1891 Jobbins of the Calcutta art school reported as follows: 'I find in a Roman Newspaper, *La Riforma*, that Rahani Kanta Nag di Calcutta: formerly a student of the School of Art, has been awarded a special silver medal at the Institution of Fine Arts for modelling the figure. This is the second prize he has won'.[137] Sadly, Rohini did not live to enjoy his achievements. Contracting tuberculosis in Rome, he returned to Calcutta in 1895 to die at twenty-seven. Rabindranath mourned the national loss, offering to bear the cost of bringing his sculptures home from Italy.[138]

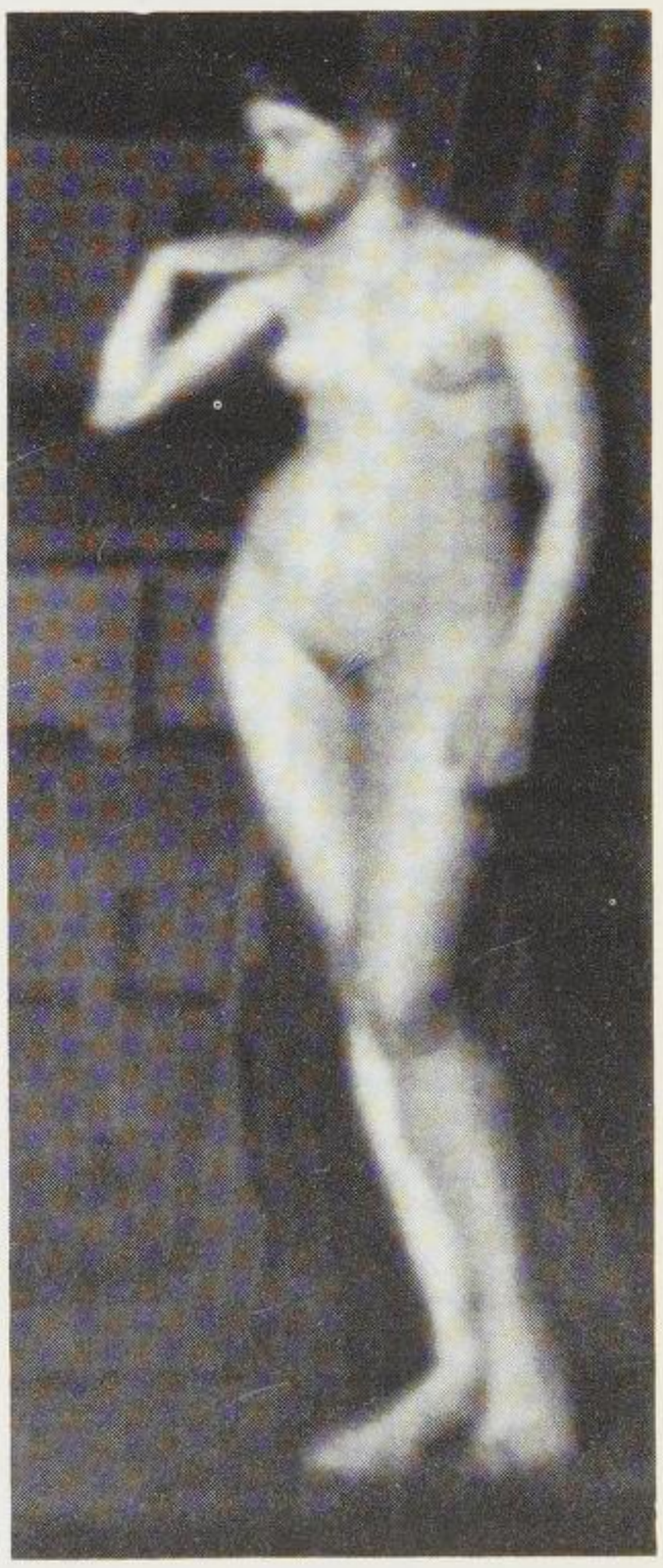
The other artist was Sashi Hesh (1869–?), mentioned in connection with Mhatre. From a family of modest means, Hesh started life as a teacher. His Italian journey was conceived while at the art school, with the promise of financial support by a zamindar of East Bengal. But when Hesh arrived in Rome in 1894, he carried with him a little cash and a letter of introduction from the Italian consul in Calcutta. The Royal Academy in Rome turned him down, for it was already full for that year. Undeterred, Sashi secured an audience with the king, Umberto I, who was impressed with the young foreigner. On condition that he learnt Italian within three months, he was admitted to the Academy. Hesh spent three years in Rome, followed by a further six months in Munich. Two large nudes, a male and a female, executed in Rome and Munich, indicate his competence in the field (Figs 70, 71).[139] Hesh spent five years in Paris before arriving in London, where he painted Birdwood and Dadabhai Naoroji, the first Indian MP. In 1899, the National Indian Association threw a reception in his honour. Chairing the meeting, Birdwood welcomed Hesh as a shining example of Hindu resurgence, though cautioning against overconfidence in its endurance. Then Hesh regaled the audience with an account of his life.[140]

An admirer of Classical art, Hesh told his audience that he found the Royal Academy disappointing. His criticism of British cultural dominance was rare for Indian academic artists, who had hitherto viewed European art through English eyes. The Bengali spent years on the Continent. He met his future wife Athalie Flamant in Paris, turning



70 S. Hesh: *Female Nude*, sketch produced in Rome?

71 S. Hesh: *Female Nude*, oil, painted in Munich, now in Marble Palace, Calcutta



Francophile and admiring Victor Hugo more than the English poets. Hesh's exposure to the French salon distanced him from British art, offering him ammunition for challenging the colonial legacy. Not that Hesh was uncritical in his admiration of Continental art. He deplored the modern vogue for realism in France which threatened idealism.[141] Hesh's anti-British stance was in tune with Hindu nationalism on the ascendant. Aurobindo Ghosh, soon to emerge as the theoretician of Hindu revolutionary politics, was a student in England a little earlier. Highly gifted, his unhappy years at a public school and university had alienated him from the West. After reading Classics with flying colours at Cambridge, he left for India as a champion of Hinduism against western values. The two were to meet in Baroda.[142]

Hesh returned to Calcutta in 1900 with his French betrothed. His orthodox family opposed the match but the couple was sheltered by the scientist Jagadish Bose and his wife. Leaving Athalie with them, Hesh departed for Baroda where the ground had been prepared by Birdwood and Naoroji. Sayaji Rao III, a keen patron of art, had gathered a number of Indian personalities around him. His Dewan Tanjore Madhava Rao's reforms had turned Baroda into a modern state with an impressive record of literacy, especially female literacy. The Gaekwad himself displayed an independence that irritated the British, but was attractive to the nationalists.[143]

72 F. Bose: *A Woman*, bronze, Baroda

Later, Sayaji Rao was forced by the British to curb his nationalist leanings but at the turn of the century Baroda was seething with cultural nationalism. When Aurobindo arrived in India, resentful of British dominance, he was engaged by the Gaekwad to teach at the Baroda College. His presence drew to Baroda followers of Balgangadhar Tilak. Dinendranath Roy, a Bengali journalist who recorded Aurobindo's short stay in Baroda (1892–1906), has left us a description of Hesh. The artist was put up in sumptuous quarters, normally reserved for Europeans. Roy admired the artist's dashing manner and his general bearing. On the other hand, even though Aurobindo was pleased with Hesh's nationalist sentiments, he disapproved of the artist's extravagant lifestyle. While in the princely state, Hesh did a portrait of Aurobindo, which is lost.[144]

Hesh's visit was not a success. Originally he was to paint the Gaekwad family, but Maharani Chimna Bai refused to sit for him. A smouldering rivalry between Hesh and an English painter did not help matters. The Englishman had come armed with an official recommendation and was assigned the restoration of oil paintings in the Palace. Hesh soon left Baroda in disappointment. He resented the fact that for restoration work the English artist was receiving twice the amount that Hesh had been offered for portraits. Is it possible that Hesh's own personality was a factor in his failure at Baroda? Unlike him, Fanindranath Bose carried out his assignment successfully. There is evidence of Hesh's impetuosity. All the same, the Gaekwad's preference for Hesh could well have been overruled

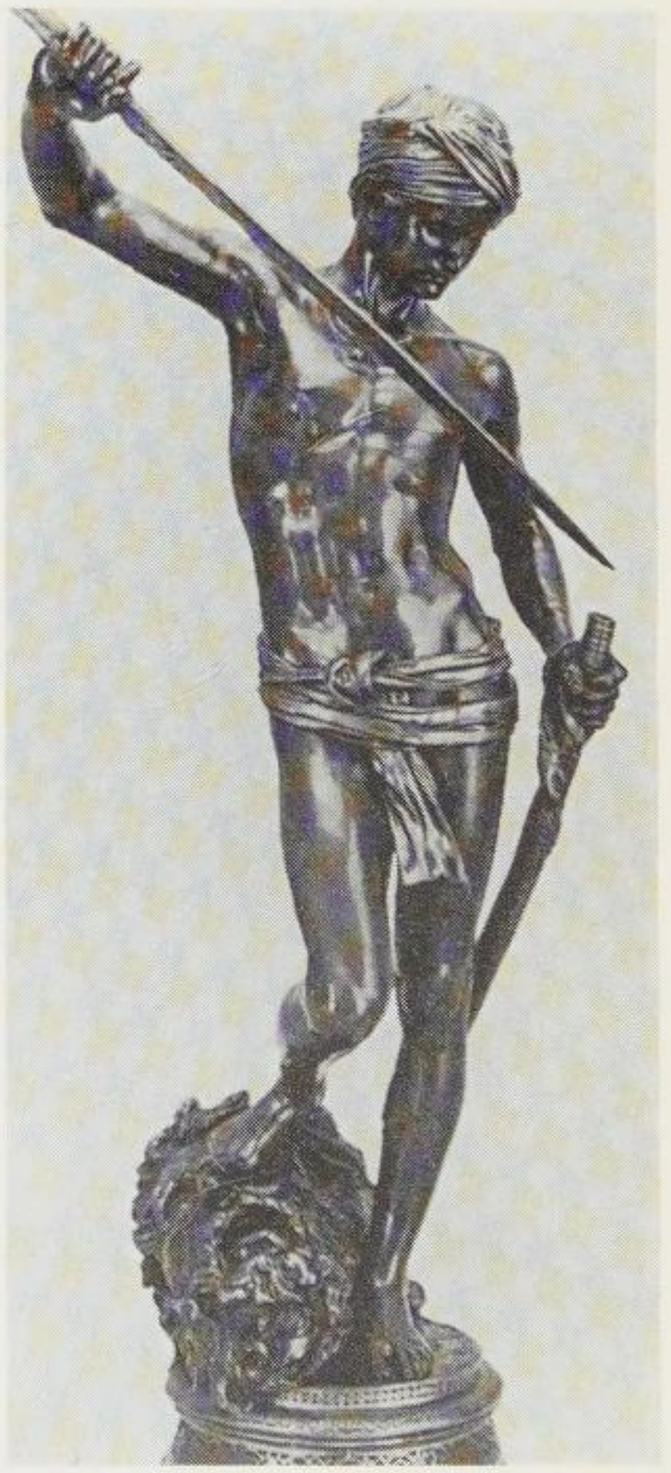
by the English Resident, for he was already under pressure from the government for harbouring Aurobindo and other Indian nationalists.[145]

On Hesh's return to Calcutta, he was married to Athalie on 14 April 1890, in accordance with Brahmo rites. His family refused to participate. The wedding was attended by leading Bengalis and a few Europeans. For a while the couple were guests of the illustrator, Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri. Hesh soon established an impressive practice in portraiture with such sitters as Congress leaders, eminent thinkers and British officials.[146] But the early success was cruelly deceptive. Shortly after, he disappeared from the Calcutta art scene, never to return. According to a contemporary account, he went to try his luck at a princely state. Was this Hyderabad, since the Salar Jang Museum has his works? Later he appears to have emigrated to Canada. Mukul Dey, a graphic artist who reported meeting him in Canada around 1917, found him living in genteel poverty. Why did he leave Calcutta so suddenly? Is it possible that the high fees that he charged priced him out of the market? Or was he caught in rising orientalism when academic painters were fast losing their standing in the community? He was too ambitious to be on the margins of his profession.[147]

The third artist who expected an Italian training was the short-lived sculptor Fanindranath Bose (1888–1926), whose professional success in Britain was rare for a non-European then. Son of a minor official in East Bengal, Bose joined the Calcutta art school, after a brief spell at the private Jubilee Art Academy. At sixteen he left for Italy. Unable to gain admission at either an Italian academy or the Royal College in London, he enrolled at the Board of Manufacturers School of Art at Edinburgh. On graduation, he worked with the sculptor Percy Portsmouth at the College of Art. The Stuart Prize and a travelling scholarship, offered jointly by Edinburgh University and the Bengal Government, enabled him to spend a year on the Continent. He continued his training in Paris, where he impressed Rodin with his work (Fig. 72). The use of broken surfaces in Bose's bronze statuettes shows both Rodin's and the Frenchman Mercié's inspiration.[148] He was part of 'the new sculpture' movement in Britain (Fig. 73), whose members emulated Mercié's 'small-scale statuettes in which the taut, slightly twisted pose of the figures affords opportunity for the fullest display of modelled musculature and bodywork in rippling, reflective bronze'.[149]

The Bengali sculptor settled in Edinburgh, marrying a Scottish woman and opening a sculpture studio there. His début at the Royal Scottish Academy was in 1913. The next year he showed a bronze statuette, *Boy in Pain*, at the Royal Academy. His bronze *The Hunter*, exhibited in 1916, was bought by Sir William Goscombe John, a leading sculptor. John, who had worked under Rodin in Paris and produced small bronzes himself, was drawn to the sculpture. Bose entered *The Snake Charmer* for the 1919 and *The Athlete and the Hound* for the 1924 Royal Academy

73 M. J. A. Mercié: *David and Goliath*, bronze

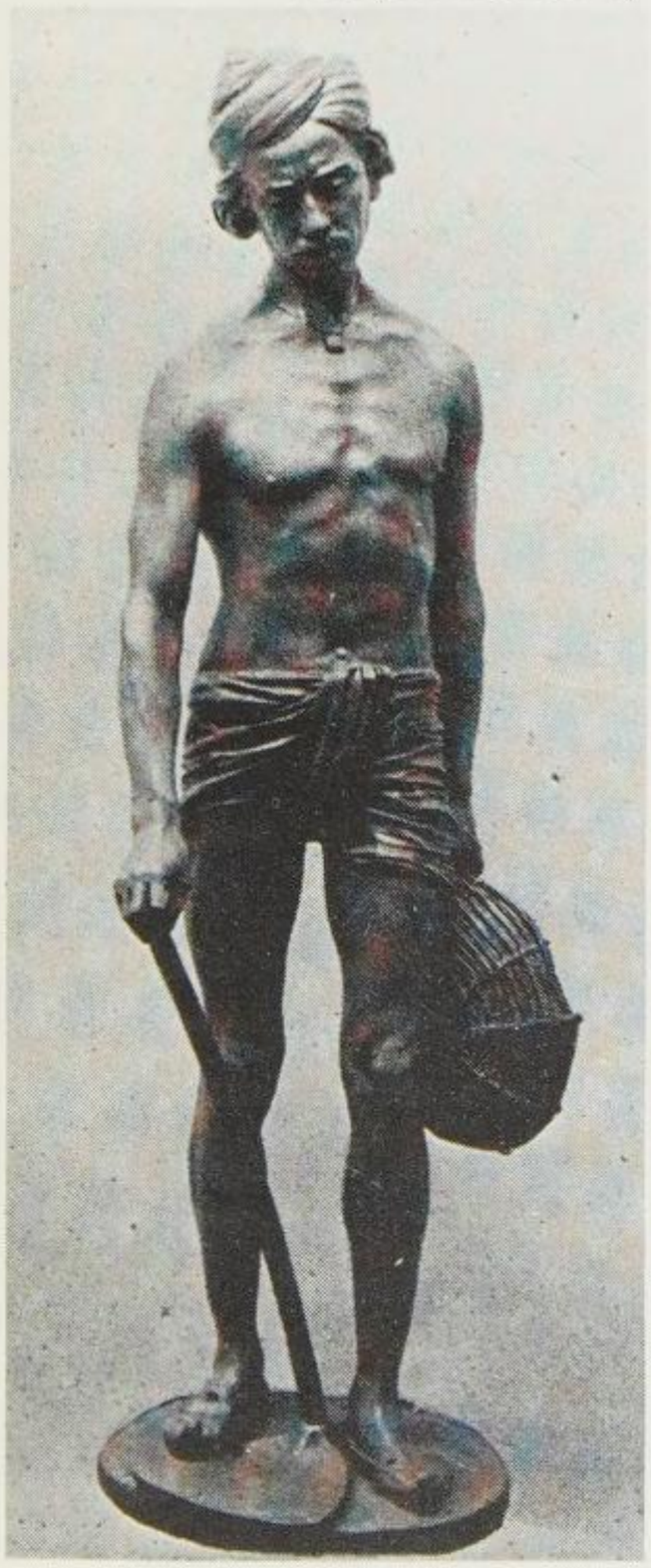


exhibition. Another well-known work of the artist was *The End of the Day* inspired by Jean-François Millet (Fig. 74). Sayaji Rao, though subdued after the Aurobindo episode, continued to scout for Indian talent. Much impressed with *The Hunter* in Goscombe John's collection, he asked Bose to make a copy of it. This was followed by an invitation to produce eight sculptures for the Laxmi Vilas Palace gardens and two for the gallery at Baroda. Unable to find a good bronze casting foundry in Baroda, Bose soon returned to Edinburgh to complete the work. During his brief visit, he taught at the newly-established Fine Arts Faculty at the Baroda College. Bose treated Indian subjects, including a piece that drew inspiration from Mhatre's *To the Temple*.[150]

Fanindranath Bose was among the select Indians honoured at the fiftieth anniversary of the Gaekwad's accession. He had earned kudos in Britain, the dream of Indian academic artists. Today, his ambitious group of sculptures based on the New Testament and a standing sculpture of St John the Baptist adorn St John's Church at Perth in Scotland (Fig. 75). The group won him the Associateship of the Royal Scottish Academy. At the election, thirty-one votes were cast in his favour compared to eight for Benno Schotz, a local sculptor of German origin. *The Scotsman* stated:

> His election is in recognition of the fact that art at its best transcends nationality . . . [but] while he has absorbed all the technique and naturalism of Western art, he is still faithful to the interior spirit of the Oriental. In his work there may be traced a subtle appreciation of Oriental character, yet expressed more or less in terms of the Western art.[151]

74 F. Bose: *The End of the Day*, bronze, exhibited at the Royal Academy



In his reply to the toast of the Associates, Bose said that at a moment of strained relations between Britain and India, this honour would reassure Indians that the Scots did not wish to thwart their 'legitimate' aspirations. Naturally, Bose was nominated for the decorations of the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta and of New Delhi. Already machinations had begun among artists and art teachers in India for wresting a share of the decorations of the new capital. For unknown reason, these two highest honours for a colonial artist were turned down by the sculptor. Bose's successful career ended at thirty-seven after a brief illness. But his short life became significant in more than one sense. In 1920, an appreciative piece by Nihal Singh in *The Graphic* of London sparked off a controversy between orientalists and westernisers in Bengal. Bose was described as 'the rising star [and] the first Bengali to gain international fame as a sculptor'.[152]

75 F. Bose: *St John*, bronze, St John's Kirk, Perth

4 THE POWER OF THE PRINTED IMAGE

> In principle a work of art has always been reproducible . . . Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new.
>
> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 1955

THE RISE OF PICTORIAL JOURNALISM

Art schools and art societies, the new institutions that helped to establish the supremacy of academic art in Bombay and Calcutta, enjoyed Raj patronage. But there were modern innovations, namely printing technology and the processes of mechanical reproduction, that flourished independently of the government. These means of mass communication made further assaults on Indian sensibility, turning urban India into a 'visual society', dominated by the printed image. They affected equally the elite and the ordinary people: lithographic prints served a mass market that cut across class barriers, while pictorial journalism became an indispensable part of literate culture. The educated enjoyed a rich harvest of illustrated magazines, picture books for children and cartoons. The appearance of high-quality plates lent greater credibility to writings on art. As printing presses mushroomed, these publications reinforced public taste for academic art.

The mechanical production of images opened up endless possibilities for the enterprising journalist. Graphic artists, for instance, served their apprenticeship as illustrators and cartoonists on magazines. For a remarkable flair in blending literary and illustrative journalism we must turn to the brilliant early practitioner, Ramananda Chatterjee. His career coincided with the Bengal Renaissance and the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885. In 1909, the influential editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, W. T. Stead, paid a tribute to this pioneer:

> the sanest Indians are for a 'nationhood of India', undivided by caste, religion or racial differences. A notable representative of this . . . is Ramananda Chatterjee. He [seeks], through the medium of the Press, to

> rouse India to a sense of its fallen condition and inspire the natives of the land to help themselves. He is pre-eminently an editor, although . . . he has been associated with many reform movements. At present he is the editor, publisher and owner of the Modern Review, a high-grade illustrated monthly magazine, published in English, and Prabasi, a Bengalee organ.[1]

From the outset, two interests dominated Ramananda's thinking, art and nationalism; he combined them with a rare success. A thoroughly modern entrepreneur, thrown up by colonial India, Ramananda took pride in professionalism, insisting on the punctual appearance of his journals and the prompt payment of contributors. His career was an object lesson in anticipating emerging trends and steering his ventures adroitly in those directions. Yet, he was not merely a journalist; he was also the most successful one, with an unfailing instinct for backing promising artists. Ramananda moved painlessly from Ravi Varma to Abanindranath, as naturalism gave way to *swadeshi* orientalism. An attachment to liberal values was evident in all his activity. Born a Brahmin, he gave up his sacred thread under the influence of the Brahmo Samaj. His early endeavours were taken up with children's education and with improving the lot of Indian women. During his schooldays he tried to set up an evening school for working men. While at university, he responded to the early stirrings of nationalism. But, even though he regularly attended Congress sessions, Ramananda saw his role as a journalist rather than as an active politician.[2]

Like many an ambitious young Bengali of the period, Ramananda seized the opportunity of a career outside Bengal. Here, as a teacher at the Kayastha College in Allahabad, he conceived his first illustrated magazine, *Pradip* (1897). The opening issue explained its aims: 'If you ask us why another Bengali magazine . . . the reason [is] that there is none yet of its like in Bengali which combines pleasure with edification'.[3] *Pradip* set the trend in non-specialist vernacular magazines. It provided entertaining reading for the leisured in science, ethnography, archaeology, literature, the arts and other miscellaneous topics. When, following this success, Ramananda was asked to publish an English edition of the *Kayastha Samachar* in 1899, he was able to realise his second dream – to foster national unity through art.[4]

Ramananda's most successful ventures were *Prabasi* and *Modern Review*, to which W. T. Stead referred. The cover of the first issue of *Prabasi* (1901) proudly displayed a cultural conspectus of Indian architecture: Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh and even Burmese (Burma then being under the Raj); the editorial announced the pan-Indian sentiments of its editor. The issue sold out immediately and had to be reprinted. In time, however, the limited readership of *Prabāsi* disappointed Ramananda. His decision in 1907 to launch the English language *Modern Review* carried his nationalist message to English-speaking Indians, besides being a

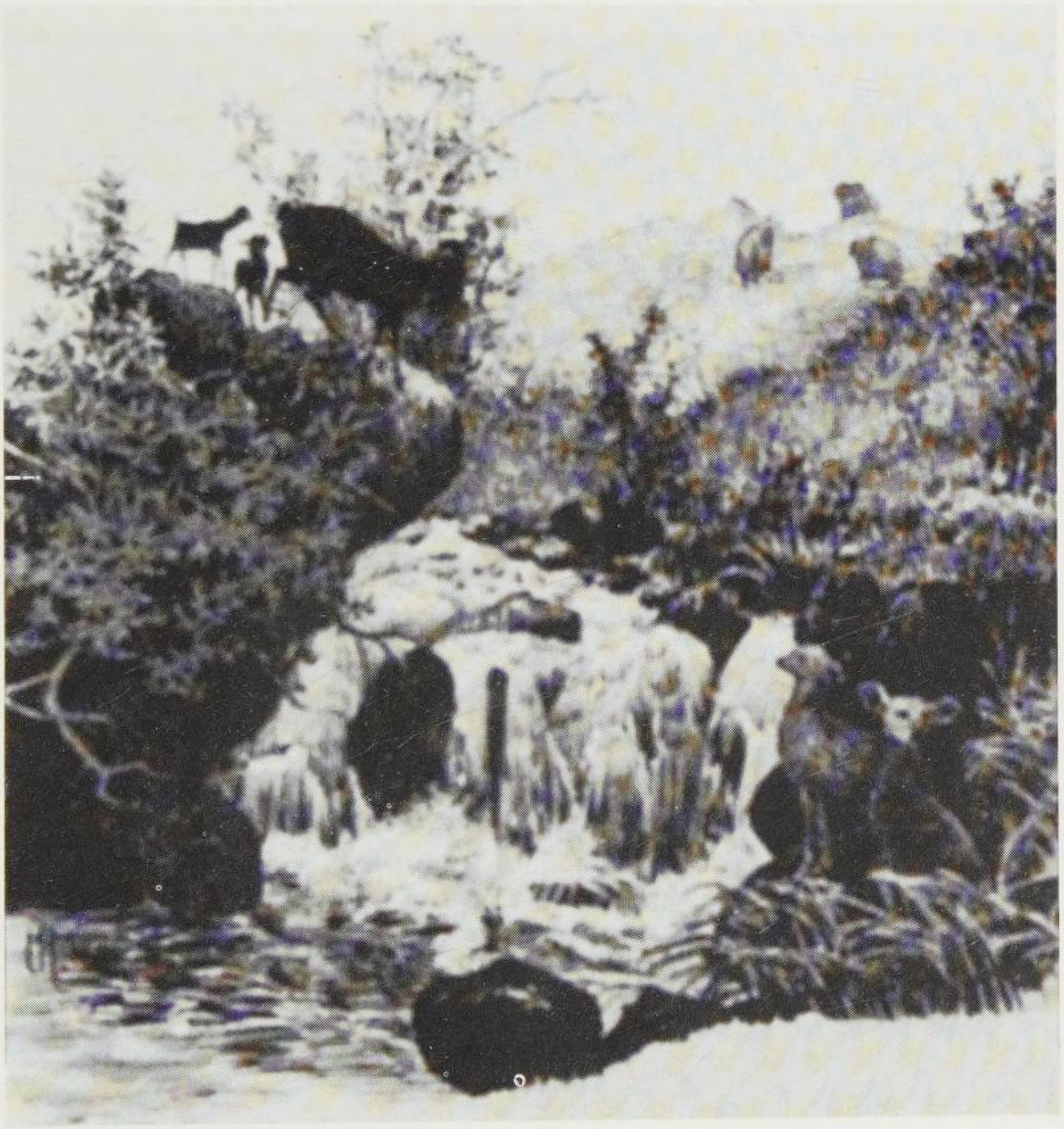
sound business move. He was convinced that the foreign rulers must be made aware of emergent nationalism. Before *Modern Review* appeared, the ground was prepared with a publicity campaign led by well-known writers.[5]

Modern Review more than fulfilled Ramananda's expectations: it was read nationwide. Much of its attraction lay in its superior illustrations. Not that illustrated magazines did not then exist in India; wood-blocks and lithographs were common in books. In Bengal, lithographic illustrations were an important feature of the art journal, *Shilpa Pushpānjali*, and the children's magazine, *Bālak*, both issued in 1885. But by and large, illustrations were conspicuous by their absence; if they appeared at all, their poor reproductions failed to leave an impression. This was all the more serious in articles on art: witness the critic Balendranath Tagore's remarkable essays in *Bhārati*. Unillustrated, they remained in obscurity until recently. For Ramananda, poor pictures were even more serious. His objective after all was to bring art to the reading public as part of the nationalist agenda. But he stood little chance of success without the new half-tone blocks. This revolution in reproduction, made possible by photography, captured the subtle gradations of light and shade essential for a faithful rendering of naturalism. The process had just appeared in the West in the wake of experiments with the camera. Ramananda saw its potential and immediately replaced the earlier lithographic illustrations with half-tones.[6]

Ramananda was fortunate in having a friend in Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri, an *uomo universale*. A member of the small group of liberal Brahmos, he was an intimate friend of the Tagores and of the scientist, Jagadish Bose, one of the first Indian Fellows of the Royal Society. Today Raychaudhuri is scarcely remembered outside Bengal, although his half-tone methods were in extensive use until recently (Fig. 76). At the turn of the century, however, he was widely admired as an innovator in photographic reproduction. His experiments were published regularly in the *Penrose Annual*. The journal, *Process Work and Electrotyping*, noted his importance: 'Mr. Upendrakishor Ray of Calcutta . . . is far ahead of European and American workers in originality, which is all the more surprising when we consider how far he is from hub-centres of process work'.[7] In 1902 he brought out the 'Ray Tint Process', used the following year for colour plates in magazines. By 1913, his own printing press was producing colour blocks, having broken new ground with other inventions that received favourable notices. Upendrakishore's 'Screen Adjusting Process' was singled out as a 'unique method . . . [which] has been supplied to some of the leading technical schools in England where it has been reported on very favourably'.[8] The Director of Public Instruction in Bengal, seeking ways to illustrate school textboks attractively, spoke of Raychaudhuri: 'I had no idea that such good illustration printing . . . could be done in Bengal'.[9]

Half-tone illustrations quickly became the norm in publishing, not least in Ramananda's magazines. The earliest monochrome half-tone plates were Sashi Hesh's *Purānic* illustration in *Pradip* (1901) and Ravi Varma's *Sītā* in *Prabāsi* (1901). Varma's *Woman Playing Saravat* in *Prabāsi* (1902), using the 'Ray Tint Process', captured for the first time the softer tones of an oil painting, which pleased the famous artist. The next year, the pioneer editor went on to colour reproduction, printing Varma's *Aja's Lament* in three colours. The year after, *Prabāsi*, which always gave prominence to European art, printed full-colour plates of Raphael's *St Cecilia* and *The Knight's Dream*. Around 1907, Ramananda brought out the first biography of Ravi Varma, illustrated with monochrome plates. Soon Dhurandhar, the Bombay artist, became a regular feature in *Prabāsi*.[10]

In 1908, when Ramananda moved his press from Allahabad to Calcutta, it became easier for him to make more regular use of Upendrakishore's printing firm. The editor of *Prabāsi* introduced the



76 U. Raychaudhuri: Illustration from Rabindranath's *Nadi*

practice of adding a brief description to the 'Painting of the Month', a convention eagerly emulated by other serials. In short, there was gradually created an informed environment for art in which half-tone plates played an indispensable part. In 1909 *Bhārati* inaugurated its first full-colour art plate with the orientalist Suren Ganguly's *Hara-Pārvatī*. The layout and the caption paid obvious homage to Ramananda.[11] Not to be outdone, *Sāhitya*, *Bhārati*'s arch-rival, followed suit in 1910 with its own art plates of European and Indian salon artists. It had already published photographs of literary figures in 1893.[12] *Shilpa o Sāhitya*, an art magazine which came out in 1908, contained monochrome and colour plates as a regular feature.[13]

Popular Bengali monthlies took note of Ramananda's inspired guess that illustrations enhanced sales. But there were considerable fluctuations in the quality of plates in an explosion of illustrated magazines. In 1907, when the novelist Prabhat Mukhopadhaya founded a new monthly, *Mānasi o Marmabāni*, he was able to draw upon the experience of *Prabāsi* and *Modern Review*, to fill his magazine with a rich crop of pictures. The peak was reached in 1913 with *Bhārat Barsha*, launched by another literary figure, the playwright Dwijendralal Roy. His journal in time rivalled if not outstripped *Prabāsi* in popularity. By now, technology had ceased to pose problems; neither was its cost prohibitive. Many of the fledgling publications were not fussy about pirating illustrations, especially from foreign publications, thereby drastically cutting costs. Sources were seldom acknowledged, since vernacular journals were confined within linguistic boundaries. In this century, Bengal could boast many illustrated magazines and even some of quality. In all of them the half-tone art plates pioneered by Raychaudhuri were the main selling point. Sadly, he himself hardly profited from his inventions, which had no rival until the advent of the offset litho process in 1930.[14]

The influence of these illustrated monthlies on educated taste cannot be overstated. Rabindranath once complained that 'the educated had driven the Bengali language into the zenana. English was used for all correspondence, intellectual work and even conversation [among men]'.[15] Only a minority of Bengali women had access to English; social etiquette forbade them from attending public exhibitions. The plethora of vernacular monthlies, whose price was within the reach of the average household, benefited these women. The hitherto closed doors of the cosmopolitan world of art were at last open to them. These magazines were eagerly and regularly bought. Even today, elegant leather-bound back numbers of *Prabāsi*, *Bhārati*, *Sāhitya*, *Mānasi o Marmabāni*, *Bhārat Barsha* and *Māsik Basumati* are to be found in Bengali homes.

Ramananda's art plates provided the model for magazine publishing in the rest of India. *Prabāsi* inspired an erstwhile colleague of his from Allahabad. In 1907, Pandit Balkrishna Bhatta brought out a well-produced, illustrated Hindi monthly, *Bālprabhākar*, from Varanasi.

Among journals outside Bengal, few could rival *Kumār* (Fig. 77), the brainchild of Ravishankar Rawal, the painter from Ahmedabad, and his colleague, Bacchubhai Rawat. Rawat originally worked for the pioneer Gujarati magazine, *Vasmi Sadi* (Fig. 78), published from Bombay. A magazine of light reading, it carried illustrated features on topics such as photography, the cinema of Chaplin and the life of Jagadish Bose. Occasionally it reproduced Indian miniatures, while its preference in contemporary painting was for Ravi Varma and Dhurandhar. In 1921 it closed down on the death of its owner, Haji Mohammad Allarakhia Shivji. In 1924 *Kumār* became its successor after a chance meeting between Rawal and Rawat.[16]

Rawal was convinced that the average educated Gujarati, who went for European prints and Ravi Varma oleographs, needed to improve his taste. Though immensely energetic, Allarakhia was not discriminating. With a quality magazine in mind, Rawal studied the techniques of European art journals taken by an artist friend. But his immediate model was *Modern Review*, brought to his notice by Gandhi's personal secretary,

77 *Left* Cover of *Kumār*

78 Cover of *Vasmi Sadi*

Mahadev Desai. *Kumār* aimed at educating the young in science and art and at providing entertaining literature at an affordable price. The articles were similar to those in *Modern Review*: on physical culture (a nationalist preoccupation), current affairs and on the leaders of cultural nationalism in Bengal. Rawal never underestimated the impact of quality illustrations on the reader.[17]

The 1920s saw the appearance of several talented illustrators in Bengal. They skilfully decorated margins and page headings with lunettes and other devices, cleverly blending volutes with voluptuous females. Arthur Rackham and Edmund Dulac, the Victorian illustrators, inspired them. The most successful exponent of this genre was Satish Sinha, who had a talent for ornamenting title pages with *art nouveau* arabesques and meandering curves. He enjoyed a virtual monopoly in *Basumati* (Fig. 79), which now rivalled older monthlies, though Hemen Majumdar and other well-known painters occasionally supplied designs to the magazine. Before long, *Bhārat Barsha* engaged the cartoonist and illustrator Jatin Sen to produce similar vignettes.[18] These literary and cultural magazines were an inspiration to adolescents, who produced small-circulation literary magazines elegantly designed and written with beautiful calligraphy.

THE CHILD'S WORLD OF PLAY

In the last century, the demand for illustrated children's books rose dramatically in Bengal. Educational reformers wanted wholesome reading material. They were also keen to counteract missionary influence. It is no coincidence that the field was dominated by Brahmos, who took education to be a moral force and an instrument for change. In 1844, the Tattvabodhini Sabha produced an early Bengali spelling book, followed by other primers such as *Sishu Sikshā*, *Sishu Bodh*, and in 1855 the educationist Iswarchandra Vidyasagar's *Barna Parichay*. This introduction

79 A decorative design from *Māsik Basumati*

to the Bengali alphabet is yet to be superseded. The later editions had recourse to lithographs to enhance their appeal.[19]

Even greater scope was offered by children's stories and nursery rhymes. Although it was only in the last century that story books began to be published, story-telling had an ancient tradition in India, each region possessing its own lore of nursery rhymes and fairy tales. Nineteenth-century philologists regarded India as the ultimate source of many European folk stories. Indian compendia such as the *Pañcatantra* and the *Hitopodeśa* were passed along medieval trade routes to the West. Household tales existed in an oral form, retold by women from generation to generation. In the last century, they were compiled, codified and published. This concerted effort was a worldwide phenomenon. It followed in the wake of the philological work of the brothers Grimm. They were persuaded by Herder to listen to the unadorned voice of the *Volk*. Their researches into Aryan folklore made them appreciate Indian folklore.[20]

Sir Richard Temple's son, Richard Carnac Temple, an officer in the Indian army, was a folklorist of repute. A member of the anthropologist E. B. Tylor's Folk-Lore Society of England, Temple began compiling stories from different parts of India and analysing them according to the plan formulated by the Society. By 1884, a number of works, *Indian Fairy Tales* (1880), *Old Deccan Days* (3rd edn 1881), *Legends of the Punjab* (vol. I 1883–4), Damant's translation of Bengali legends in the *Indian Antiquary* (1872–8), *Folk Tales of Bengal* (1883) and *Wide-Awake Stories* (1884) appeared in print. The last was by the novelist Flora Annie Steel, who recorded the oral tales of Punjab at Temple's instance. The volume contained Temple's copious annotations and a structural analysis of these 'Aryan' folk-tales.[21]

Temple was also instrumental in the publication of *Folk Tales of Bengal*. Its author, Reverend Lalbehari Day, an influential figure in Bengal, knew the Grimms' work and duly sought to express the Aryan origins of the Bengali stories. He also captured the peculiarly Bengali flavour of these tales of tigers, bandits, goblins, demons, *yakṣas* and various spine-chilling monsters told by Bengali grannies to lull children to sleep on sultry summer nights.[22] For the urban child, however, the classic work was *Thakurmār Jhuli* (1907) by Dakshina Ranjan Mitra Majumdar (Fig. 80). The title translates loosely as 'Granny's Treasure-Sack': the fantasy, terror and whimsy inside it kept generations of Bengali children spellbound. The illustrations were woodcuts based on Dakshina Ranjan's sketches. The author, who acknowledged his debt to Day, had traipsed the villages of Bengal compiling rustic women's tales with the help of a primitive 'recording' machine. He was fired by the *swadeshi* urge to preserve folklore. The other outstanding contribution in this genre was Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri's elegant retelling of household tales, *Tuntunir Boi* (The Tailor-Bird's Book).[23]

The proliferation of children's literature followed the dictates of the new age. Until the nineteenth century, children were normally treated as miniature adults. The Romantic movement helped grown-ups discover the self-contained world of children, giving rise to the subject of child psychology. Educationists re-read Rousseau, who had urged the natural growth of children. Kindergartens were founded to nurture children's imagination, unfettered by adult constraints. Fröbel valued highly the

80 Priyagopal Das, *Chang Bang*, woodcut, from *Thākurmār Jhuli*, 1907

role of a stimulating environment in the spontaneous growth of a child. This revolution in attitudes towards children reached Bengal as part of the wider changes in sensibility brought about by Romanticism.[24]

Once again, the more liberal elements were in the forefront, especially the Brahmos. Some of the leading Brahmos, the Tagores and Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri for instance, engaged actively in exploring the 'play' element in Bengali culture. Of course the 'play' element has formed an integral part of Indian culture with Hindu mythology attaching a central importance to divine playfulness or play-acting (*līlā*). Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* has taught us to appreciate the value of games and of make-believe worlds, indeed play or play-acting has psychological significance with physiological roots. But its development in nineteenth-century Bengal reflected the rise of individualism, which for the first time allowed children to be taken seriously.[25]

The invention of parlour games and brain-teasers to test intelligence and knowledge was a regular part of the Tagore household. We know of pictorial puzzles devised by Rabindranath in his youth. What was new was that these games were not dismissed by grown-ups as mere child's play, but were enthusiastically indulged in. In Rabindranath's case these early pranks laid the foundations of his old-age 'automatic' drawings. Theatre, costume drama and making masks were the Tagores' way of visualising the make-believe world. After returning from Japan, Rabindranath encouraged Abanindranath to take up the art of mask. Abanindranath's masks combined portraiture with elements from Japanese culture. He found playfulness a most congenial way to live. At the very end of his life he produced *objets trouvés* in a spirit of pure playfulness.[26]

In both Rabindranath and Abanindranath's writings, daydreaming and free play of the imagination recur. One of Rabindranath's most poignant accounts of a child's world is his play, *The Post Office*. Less known outside Bengal are Abanindranath's stories for children. As he confessed, he always felt more at home in their world. The same urge that made him encourage his students to give free rein to their imagination is evident in his early writing for children, *Kshirer Putul* (c. 1896). He had previously published a children's version of *Abhijñāna Śakuntalam* but this was the first instance in which visual and linguistic invention flowed effortlessly from his pen. A charming example of this mixed genre of 'ut pictura poesis' are his late illustrations to the traditional poem *Kabikankan Chandi* (Fig. X).[27]

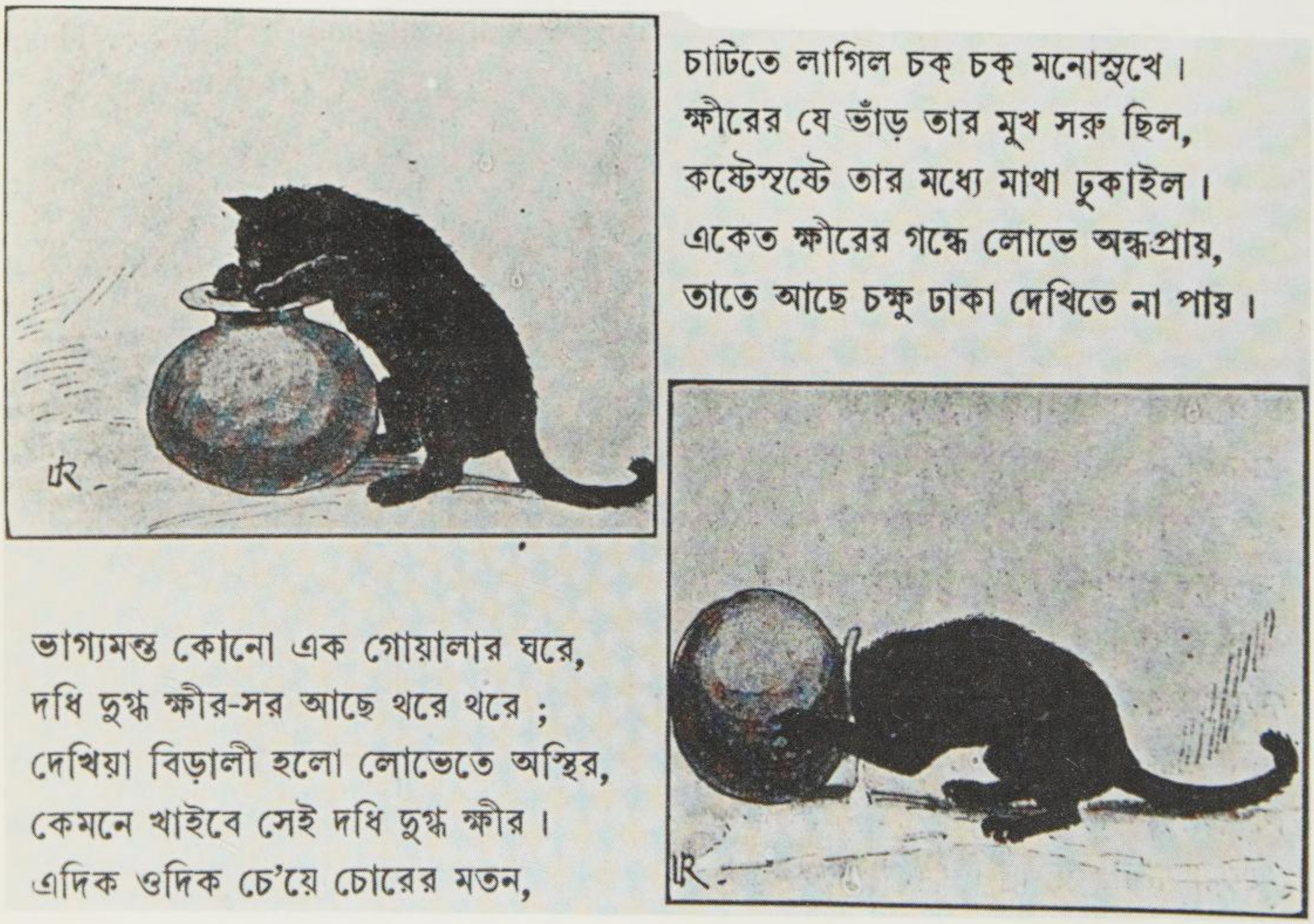
From the 1880s, the rapid expansion of journalism in Bengal coupled with educational reforms drew lively minds to children's magazines. They felt it necessary to supplement the *Boy's Own Paper* and other imported literature with Bengali publications. The first such venture, *Sakhā*, was published in 1883 by Pramadacharan Sen with illustrations by Upendrakishore. Sen died penniless in 1885, despite the popularity of his magazine, the year the Tagores launched *Bālak* with illustrations by

Harish Chandra Haldar. *Sāthi* followed *Sakhā* in 1893. In 1895, a prominent Brahmo thinker, Sibnath Sastri, brought out *Mukul*. By the turn of the century, children in Calcutta had a wide choice of illustrated magazines.[28]

In 1913, Upendrakishore entered the field with a children's magazine that set an example in graceful simplicity. He had the advantages of an excellent printing press and early experience as illustrator in *Sakhā*. *Tuntunir Boi* and children's versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* were his contributions to children's literature. *Sandesh* was conceived, written, illustrated and edited almost single-handedly by Upendrakishore until his death in 1915. When it was launched in 1913, his son Sukumar was in England studying printing technology. Sukumar joined his father in the project on his return.[29]

From its inception, *Sandesh* (Fig. 81) was the most attractive Bengali publication for children. Unlike the relatively bland names *Sakhā* and *Sāthi* (both meaning playmate), or *Bālak* (boy), the name *Sandesh* evoked a very different world. Its sparkling *double entendre* played as much on the Bengali word as on a Bengali weakness (the word has the dual meaning

81 U. Raychaudhuri, four illustrations in *Sandesh*



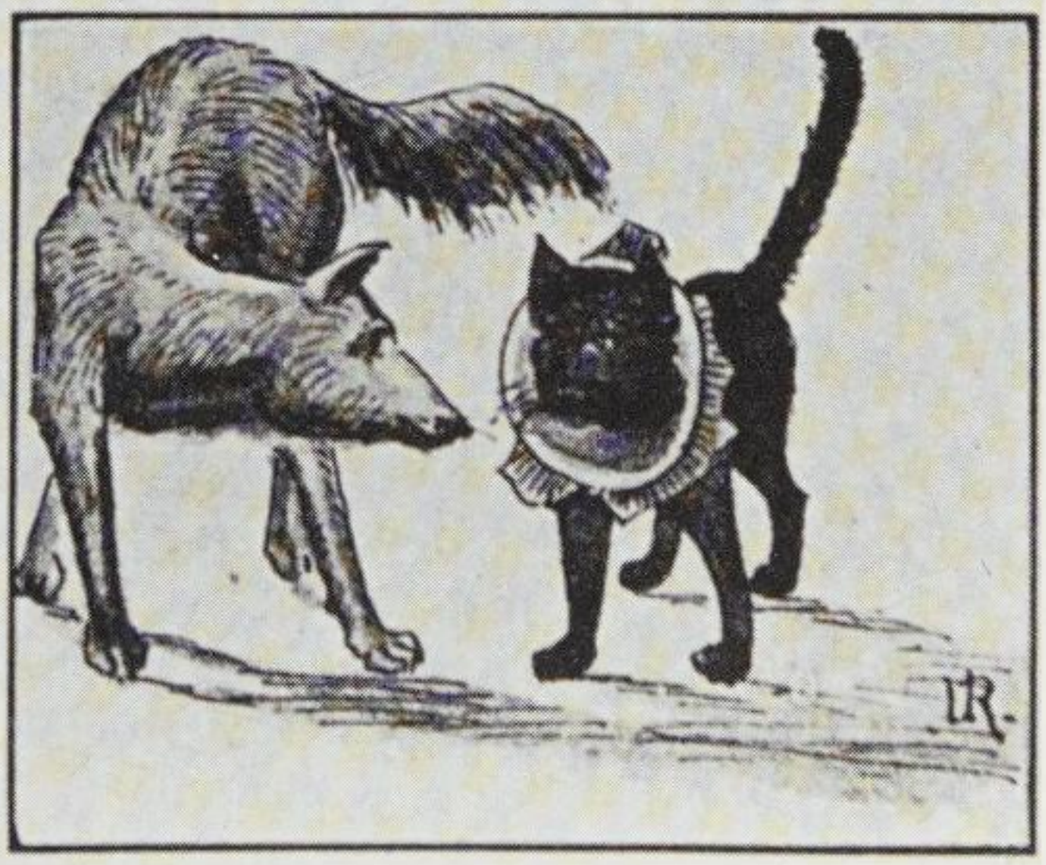
'news' and a favourite sweetmeat of Bengal). On the cover of the first issue a bearded 'grandad' carried aloft a large earthen pot of delicious *sandesh*. Witty pictures and a unique brand of gentle humour were everywhere. Upendrakishore checked that the contents held a child's attention by studying his own family's reactions.[30]

Sandesh was distantly modelled on *Boy's Own Paper*, the staple diet of children all over the empire, but several features were noteworthy. Puzzles and word games abounded. A scientist and inventor himself, Upendrakishore loved problem-solving stories. Not only did he and his son Sukumar keep abreast of the latest scientific advances, they made them accessible in simple, lucid language. Their own scientific writings were a model of clarity, interspersed with wry humour and acute observation.[31]

যথাযোগ্য শিক্ষা তারে দিল পরিপাটী

বিড়ালীর কাণ্ড দেখি লয়ে এক লাঠি,
যথাযোগ্য শিক্ষা তারে দিল পরিপাটী।
অকস্মাৎ বজ্রাঘাৎ বিড়ালীর মাথে,
ভাঙ্গিল সুখের স্বপ্ন ভাঁড় ভাঙ্গা সাথে।
ভাঙ্গা কলসীর কাণা গলায় রহিল,
উচ্চ পুচ্ছ করি পুসি ছুটিয়া চলিল।
বহু দূর গিয়া এক বট বৃক্ষ তলে,
বিশ্রামে বসিল হায় পিঠ যায় জ্ব'লে।
ক্ষীরের মিষ্টতা আর লাঠির প্রহার,
কোন্‌টা কেমন মিষ্ট করিছে বিচার।

ভাবিয়া দেখিনু চিত্তে অসার-সংসার ;
মিছা সংসারের ফাঁদে পড়ে কেন থাকি,
শেষকালে প্রাণপণে হরি বলে ডাকি।
বৈরাগ্যে আমার এবে পরিপূর্ণ মন,
কলসী বাঁধিয়া গলে যাচ্ছি বৃন্দাবন।"
শেয়ালী বলিছে—"মাসী পিঠে কেন দাগ?
মুখে ক্ষীর মেখে কেবা করেছে সোহাগ?"
বেড়ালী দেখিল সব বুঝেছে শেয়ালী,
খাটিল না খাটিল না মিছা চতুরালী।
মেউ মেউ করি সেই পিছু পানে হটে,
কথা কাটাকাটি হ'ল দুই শঠে শঠে।



In *Sandesh*, the world of science, complex as it was, was brought to life with vivid illustrations. Bengali children, used to the ogres of Hindu mythology, could now discover the thrill of prehistoric monsters. In the illustration in question, a gigantic brontosaurus lurks above the trees of the Eden Gardens, Calcutta's best-known park, as a cricket match takes place. The scale of the creature is brought home by juxtaposing it with a familiar winter sight in Calcutta. After Upendrakishore's death, between 1916 and his own death in 1923, Sukumar ran the magazine and contributed stories and articles about general knowledge. The subjects were as varied as they were informative: the buried city of Pompeii, skyscrapers in America, deep-sea divers, submarines, Big Ben, the nature of the sun, chloroform, the pyramids, the end of the world, the stellar system, to name only a few. The striking aspect was not so much that Bengali children were encouraged to be curious about their environment but that they were also taught to think rationally about it.[32]

Sandesh perfected a language that was simple, amusing and accessible. The tradition went back to Vidyasagar's use of a small vocabulary. But Upendrakishore went further. He made reading attractive to urban children by using the everyday language of Calcutta. He belonged to a movement for the de-Sanskritisation of Bengali which had commenced in the previous century in the prose writings of Tekchand Thakur, Kaliprasanna Sinha and others. At the same time, being a supporter of education as a moral force, Upendrakishore was anxious that language in *Sandesh* should retain its innocent quality. 'One of the unwritten laws of contemporary morality', wrote P. Ariès in 1962, 'the strictest and the best respected of all, requires adults to avoid any reference, above all any humorous reference, to sexual matters in the presence of children. This notion was entirely foreign to the society of old'.[33]

This concern for children paralleled a wider concern for modern Bengali literature. There had been tensions within Bengali society throughout the last century that had erupted in sporadic conflicts between English-educated liberals and the defenders of older values. In Calcutta, a new morality had emerged in the wake of Victorian evangelism, with the aim of removing the franker aspects of Bengali language and behaviour. It had a profound effect on sensibility and on social conduct. The founding of the Society for the Prevention of Obscenity by Vidyasagar in the late nineteenth century was one of its products. Yet, in 1907, *Thākurmār Jhuli*, meant for children, reproduced folk tales as faithfully as possible. Not only did Dakshina Ranjan preserve the archaic language by then considered indecent, he also retained scenes of sadism and other unpleasant aspects of the oral tradition. His original transcription is now lost but even the bowdlerised version is strong stuff. Upendrakishore, however, who insisted that children's tales be morally uplifting as well as graceful, carefully shielded them from these aspects in his writings.[34]

What really made *Sandesh* popular were its humorous illustrations.

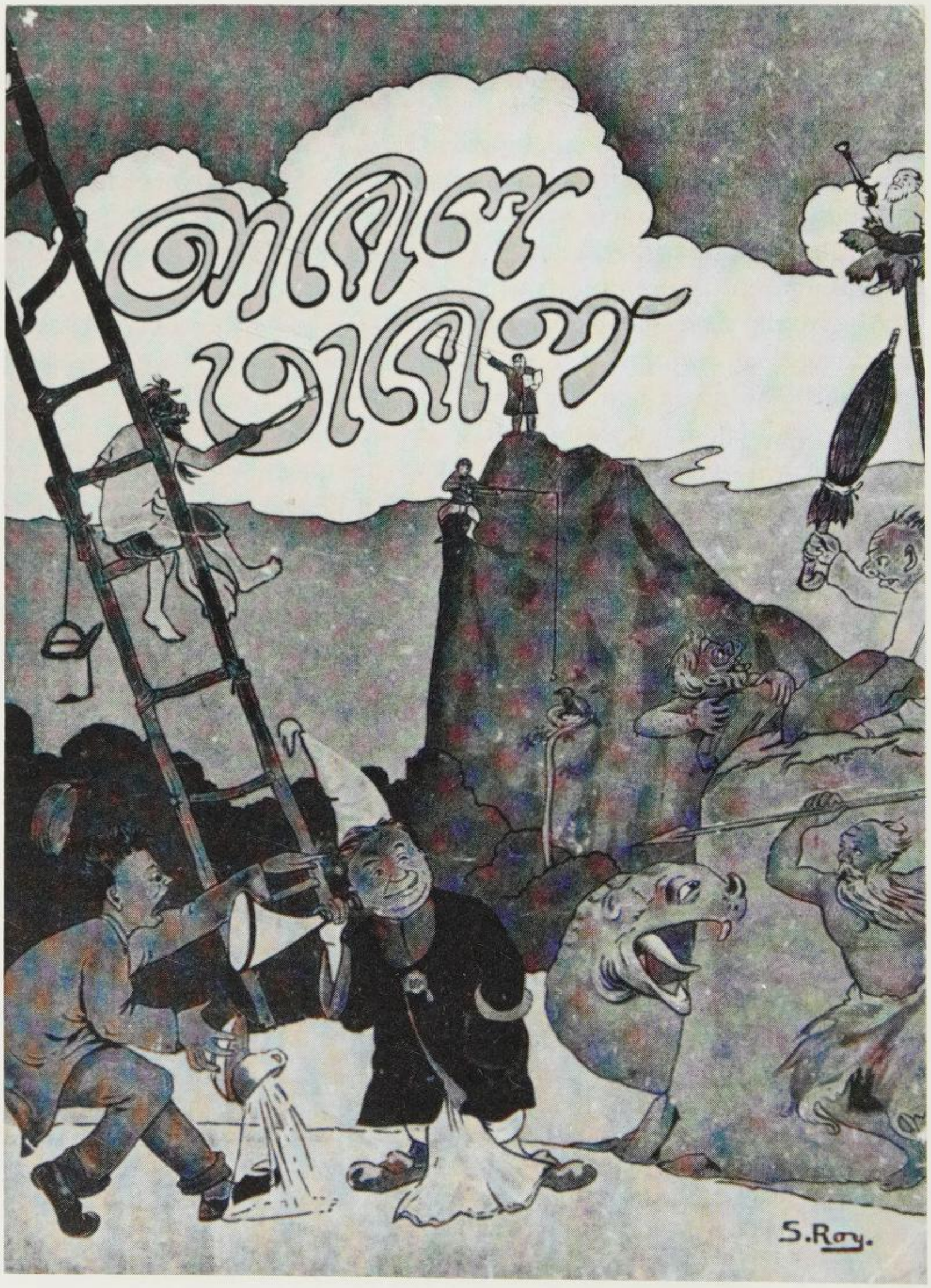
They effectively finished off the earlier lithographs that had enjoyed a virtual monopoly. A comparison between wood-engraved illustrations in *Thākurmār Jhuli* and half-tone pictures in *Sandesh* makes this clear. Just as he tried to popularise science, Upendrakishore sought to bring everyday experience to Hindu mythology and give it an immediate appeal to urban children. His own representational skill stood him in good stead when de-mythologising the gods. In his celebrated *Death of Balarāma*, Upendrakishore treats this hero of the *Mahābhārata* as a believable human being rather than as a conventional *avatār* of Viṣṇu. And yet he also manages to convey the supernatural element of the story – an enormous many-hooded snake issuing out of Balarāma's mouth – all the more convincingly. Other instances show a playful attitude to the gods. A rare appreciation of this quality in Upendrakishore came from Sister Nivedita, an influential figure in the Bengali art world. 'The humour and variety with which the Asuras [demons] are represented here is delightful', she commented on Upendrakishore's mythological illustration, *The Churning of the Ocean*.[35] He had shown the gods as vulnerable and human, not mere objects of piety.

Above all, *Sandesh* became celebrated for the nonsense rhymes of Sukumar Ray, in which the world of play and that of language came together. The genre was already highly developed in Bengali folklore. The Bengali language lends itself to *double entendres* and wordplay. Its speakers have always been captivated by puns, onomatopoeia, alliteration and repetition of sounds. During the Bengal Renaissance, the traditional folkloric rhymes and idioms received a new lease of life and a modern form. Though the Tagores did try their hands at this, the writer most closely identified with it was Sukumar Ray. Few could write nonsense as deftly and effortlessly as he. Irrepressible pictorial and literary humour, first revealed in Upendrakishore's fantasy, 'Goopy Gyne Bāghā Byne', found fulfilment in his son. After youthful efforts for the magazine *Mukul*, Sukumar set up two literary societies with his friends – the 'Monday Club' and the 'Nonsense Club'. In a typical *jeu d'esprit* he turned the title, Monday Club, into 'Monda' (sweets) Club, an allusion to its members' favourite food. When, as club secretary, he sent out invitation cards to members, he often used the occasion to turn these into little gems of wit and whimsy.[36]

Sukumar's first farces were staged at the Nonsense Club. Ancient epics were an especially suitable vehicle for his comedy. The germ of one of his best-known farces, 'Laksmaner Saktishel' (Lakshman and the Wonder Weapon) came from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Sukumar's version of it worked on two levels. He chose a mock-heroic declamatory language as in the epic, but treated the gods as modern middle-class Bengalis. The play is full of deliberately incongruous allusions to mores of the day in a supposedly ancient setting.[37]

With Sukumar Ray we reach the high-water mark of children's

literature in India. He possessed a sixth sense of the absurd and an imagination which could parody almost any serious statement. The Bengali satirist Birbal (Pramatha Chaudhuri) often intimidated opponents by 'name-dropping' intellectuals, especially French philosophers, not much known in India. Once, at a Monday Club session, Sukumar amused everyone by reading out an imaginary letter. His mock-serious intonation left them in no doubt as to whom he was mimicking: 'I have heard that the famous philosopher Bergson has said that whatever else



82 S. Ray: Cover of *Ābol Tābol*

human beings may survive, they cannot survive if their head is cut off'.[38] Few satirists in Bengal rivalled his vocabulary of invented words. But the work that best caught his genius came in the final stages of his brief life – *Ābol Tābol* (Fig. 82), a collection of verse from a supreme word-maker.

The readers were also treated to a new form of comic drawing (Fig. 83) that blended fantasy and sharp observation of cultural behaviour. As a child, Sukumar read European humorous publications and he sometimes used them as a point of departure for his work. His poem 'Dānpitey' (The Little Horror), for instance, reminds us of the notorious brats of the American strip cartoon, 'The Katzenjammer Kids'; yet Sukumar's brats are definitely Bengali brats. Heath Robinson's uncle Lubin and his fantastic machines is similar in spirit to Sukumar's poem, 'Uncle's Contraption', though here the resemblance seems coincidental. Robinson's machine solves the problem of eating tricky little items at dinner. Ray's machine enables one to travel great distances fast: the incentive is some mouth-watering food dangling just beyond reach.[39]

Sukumar knew Edward Lear's limericks. Both of them shared a passion for mingling the surreal with the mundane. Both possessed a flair for standing a perfectly logical statement on its head. Both of them generated funny, gently satirical ideas. Both eschewed sarcasm, malice and ridicule; both left out the cruel and the grotesque. Above all, they were inspired illustrators. And yet their works display significant cultural as well as temperamental differences. Lear's verses are always tinged with melancholy, whereas Ray's topsy-turvy world is full of robust laughter. The

83 S. Ray: three illustrations from *Ābol Tābol* (*The Uncle's Contraption, Tickle-My-Ribs* and *Blighty Cow*)

finest instance is perhaps the 'Dream Song', which forms the closing verse of *Ābol Tābol*. It was composed in the last weeks of Sukumar's life, when he was dying from kala-azar at the age of thirty-five:

> The spirits dance in cloudy vaults
> Where elephants turn somersaults
> While flying steeds their wings unfold
> And naughty boys turn good as gold.
> A keen primordial lunar chill,
> The nightmare's next with bunchy frill –
> My drowsy brain such glimpses steep,
> And all my singing ends in sleep.[40]

Even if the rhythm and the imagery of the poem lose a lot in translation, as they are bound to, the creative spirit still alive at the approach of death, and the poet's total absence of self-pity, cannot but remind us of other creators in a similar situation, notably Schubert.

In *Ābol Tābol* the magical met the real in brilliantly matched words and images. But these nonsense poems specialised in Bengali idiosyncrasies. Their 'untranslatability' stems from the fact that the puns and alliterations ingeniously juxtapose Bengali and English. Sukumar Ray plays with the Bengali resonance of certain English words and images inextricably bound to bhadralok culture. That mixture made perfect sense in the bilingual colonial milieu of urban Calcutta in the early decades of this century. In our time, perhaps only Salman Rushdie has attempted a similar play with words (using by contrast Indian words within novels written in English). Those who can fully appreciate his work must be familiar with both cultures.[41]

The outlandish behaviour of Sukumar's characters amused Bengali readers because hardly anyone failed to recognise the originals. This is not true of, say, Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*. Jabberwock was a purely fantastic creature, an idea reinforced by the meaningless words invented for it; but Sukumar's 'Tickle-My-Ribs' was near to that well-known figure, the dreadful bore, who was oblivious of other people's feelings. He repeated his stock of excruciating jokes and expected people to laugh at them every time. Another set of characters, eternally condemned to portentous solemnity, evoked all sorts of memories, especially of self-righteous humbugs at Brahmo prayer meetings.[42] The colonial interaction was probably also a target. The maudlin 'Blighty Cow' was manifestly a hybrid that surely only colonialism could have produced. The bizarre 'Law under Section Twenty-One' that prevailed in the land of Lord Śiva was likely a pointed allusion to the British Raj; under this law one could be fined Rs 21 for merely tripping accidentally. Sukumar was here exposing the absurdity of the laws passed during the *swadeshi* era but his message was so gossamer-like that it seldom jarred.[43]

CARTOONS AND CARICATURES

The rise of humorous drawings in India

Sukumar's unique blend of literary and pictorial wit forms the bridge between funny drawings for children and social and political cartoons, the other thriving genre in illustrated magazines. Caricature, which makes an unsentimental observation of human foibles, was part of Sukumar's humour but the element of cruelty or the grotesque used by cartoonists for effect fell outside his dream world. The earliest newspapers to carry political cartoons were the English-owned *Bengal Hurkaru* and the *Indian Gazette* in the 1850s. Within decades, cartoons appeared in papers owned by Indians, as colonial administration became the legitimate target of journalists. The nationalist paper of Bengal, *Amrita Bāzār Patrikā*, published its first cartoon in 1872.[44]

One of the earliest cartoons to make a political impact was in *Sulav Samāchār* in the 1870s. Its message foreshadowed the Ilbert Bill (1882) which sought to abolish the immunity of European offenders to being tried by Indian judges, a government measure fought tooth and nail by the expatriate British. *Sulav Samāchār* put the Indian case forcefully by highlighting a blatant injustice: often poorer sections of the Indians were assaulted by Europeans, leading to their death. If the case came to court at all, the 'enlarged spleen' of the victim was blamed for his death. The cartoon shows a dead coolie with his weeping wife by his side. A European doctor conducts a perfunctory post mortem while the offender stands nonchalantly smoking a cigar. This suggestion of collusion between European judges and offenders did have an impact, if not the intended one. It was among the incriminating evidence that led to the vernacular press censorship of 1878.[45] The assaults continued as late as 1908, as Upendrakishore's indignant satire in *Modern Review* suggests:

> It is almost as natural for a healthy human animal to kick as it is for a horse or a cow. And kicking is a delightful pastime too. But it is deeply to be deplored that Indians should have maliciously . . . developed very big spleens, which are ruptured at the slightest touch of a human animal's boots, so that the possessors of these enlarged spleens die . . . It is sad . . . what trouble and expense the kickers are put to, and how much of the time of the British Indian Law Courts is wasted . . . In order to save kickers . . . trouble and expense in future and to prevent the waste of time of the Law Courts, we have invented the Spleen-protector . . .[46]

Parody and distortion for comic effect are the oldest human tendencies, an early Indian example of which is the temptation of the Buddha by Māra at Sanchi. In the colonial period, Kalighat artists caricatured social types: courtesans and foppish clients, phony Vaisnava mendicants, henpecked husbands and sheepish lovers. European cartoons had a mixed ancestry.

The Carracci brothers, who invented *caricatura*, developed the idea of 'perfect deformity' in their satirical sketches. Hogarth's prints, which attacked moral shortcomings in society rather than individual idiosyncrasies, made the transition from broadsheets to cartoons as an art form. But it was the printing presses in Britain that turned cartoons into pictorial journalism, dominated by the genius of Gillray and Rowlandson. The first comic illustrations by the British expatriates drew upon Rowlandson's cartoons on the Raj.[47]

Humorous drawings, as entertainment rather than as social protest, spread with the rise of illustrated magazines. In India, by the 1850s, the British cartoonist found ample material in the social 'foibles' of his community. The first visiting artist to explore this was Sir Charles D'Oyly. His *Tom Raw the Griffin* (1828) charted the *faux pas* of an East India Company novice and the funny situations in which the lad found himself. The British cartoonists in India as well as Indians learned from D'Oyly and similar artists.[48]

The progenies of Punch

However, no single humorous publication made a deeper impression in colonial India than the English magazine, *Punch*. A riotous procession of its offspring greets us in the second half of the last century: *Delhi Sketch Book*, *Momus*, *The Indian Charivari* (Figs 84, 85), *The Oudh Punch* (Fig. 86), *The Delhi Punch*, *The Punjab Punch*, *The Indian Punch* (two separate publications under the same title), *Urdu Punch* and *Basantak* (a Bengali version of *Punch*) (Fig. 87) in the north and east; *Gujarati Punch*, *Hindu Punch* (a politically radical Maharastran paper proscribed in 1909 for sedition), *Parsi Punch* and *Hindi Punch* in the west; a version of *Punch* from Madras in the south. There was even *Purneah Punch* from a remote town of Bengal.[49]

Cruickshank (1792–1878) in Britain and Charles Philipon's *Le Charivari* (1832) in France were pioneers in comic magazines. But the most enduring comic paper, *Punch: the London Charivari*, was born in a dining club in 1841. It gave birth to the word 'cartoon' in English, while its whimsical gentlemanly humour provided the model for English-humour magazines from London to Melbourne. Unlike the iconoclasts, Cruickshank, Gillray and Rowlandson, Tenniel of *Punch* stood for Victorian respectability, a respectability emulated by the British comic magazines in India. Indeed, the comic magazines in India were as clear an index of imperial mentality as *Punch*, the emblem of Victorian self-confidence.[50]

British cartoons in India, initially on Anglo-Indian lifestyle, eventually turned to Indians. As such they offer us revealing glimpses of colonial attitudes. On the whole, the most amusing cartoons, English or Indian, were on the Indian character. Yet the differences in their respective

outlooks were significant. The English-owned magazines viewed Indians from the lofty heights of Victorian moral certainty. Indian cartoonists, instead of turning the new weapon towards the ruling race, probed their own society. Secondly, the English cartoonists portrayed Indians from the outsider's viewpoint, while Indian cartoonists, being insiders, especially in Bengal, offer us a penetrating self-parody of the elite in the period of nationalist politics. In Bengali cartoons the exposure of social mores attained the ruthless candour of Gillray and Rowlandson.

The reasons for the different approaches of British and Indian cartoonists in India were historical. By the 1860s, the imperial bureaucracy had ossified into a benevolent despotism. A racially exclusive British society thrived with its quota of civil and military officials and its paraphernalia of cantonments, bungalows and social clubs. In *Curry and Rice or The Ingredients of Social Life at Our "Station" in India* (1859), G. F. Atkinson offers an affectionate burlesque of British life and manners to counteract the trauma of 1857. The elements that make up a typical station are the local judge, magistrate, deputy magistrate, padre, the foreign missionary, the sporting griffin (as in *Tom Raw*), the native *munshi* (interpreter), the doctor, as well as the mall, the band, the coffee shop, the public bath, the racecourse, the tiger hunts, the dinner parties, the formal balls and the amateur theatricals, not to mention the local potentate eager to ingratiate himself with the ruling race.[51]

What kept Britons together was a tacitly shared ideology of the imperial calling that permeated the self-image of the Victorians and threw into bold relief the essential 'otherness' of the colonised. The clearest expression of British attitudes was the popular literature of the period glorifying the empire's 'civilising' mission. If such mentality informed the British view of the 'Oriental', the Indians further suffered from the racial acrimony that attended the Uprising of 1857. British public opinion, both at home and in India, fed on the events of 1857. The stereotype of Oriental behaviour went as much into the making of *Punch* as the English cartoon magazines in India.[52]

Political reality lay behind the consensus among British cartoonists at home and abroad. To put it simply, a vast territory such as India could only be ruled with the consent of different groups. While neither of the two main parties questioned the legitimacy of British rule, there were differences between them, and between Whitehall and the Viceroy, on which Indians to encourage. The Tories were for stability under a firm paternal rule. They held on to the myth of unchanging India to counter new political demands. The welfare of the peasant was the cornerstone of their policy, while the aristocracy was seen as natural allies after 1857. Upholder of stability, *Punch* championed the Maharajas, an attitude taken up by English-owned comic magazines in India. The Liberals aimed to secure the British Raj on the consent of the western-educated. These conflicts of interests can, for instance, be seen in the Vernacular Press Act

(1878). Lord Lytton, a Tory, passed it to curb vociferous journalists. The Liberal Viceroy who repealed the unpopular measure was remembered in Congress resolutions as 'our beloved Lord Ripon'.[53] However, Liberal concessions were often stymied by the formidable Anglo-Indian lobby. In short, rather than being a smooth monolith, the Raj represented a complex dialogue between different British and Indian pressure groups, a complexity reflected in the comic magazines.

The first Anglo-Indian magazine inspired by *Punch*, *Delhi Sketch Book* (1850), was owned by *The Englishman*, the leading newspaper. This, 'Mr Punch Junior', opened with a disclaimer: essentially a 'sketchbook', its caricatures were to amuse; it did not presume to emulate *Punch*, nor wish 'to be coarse, impertinent or insulting'.[54] *Delhi Sketch Book* poked gentle fun at British social life, as private jokes to be shared among its English

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OR
THE INDIAN PUNCH.
VOL. IX. No. III.
CALCUTTA
FEBRUARY 2, 1877.
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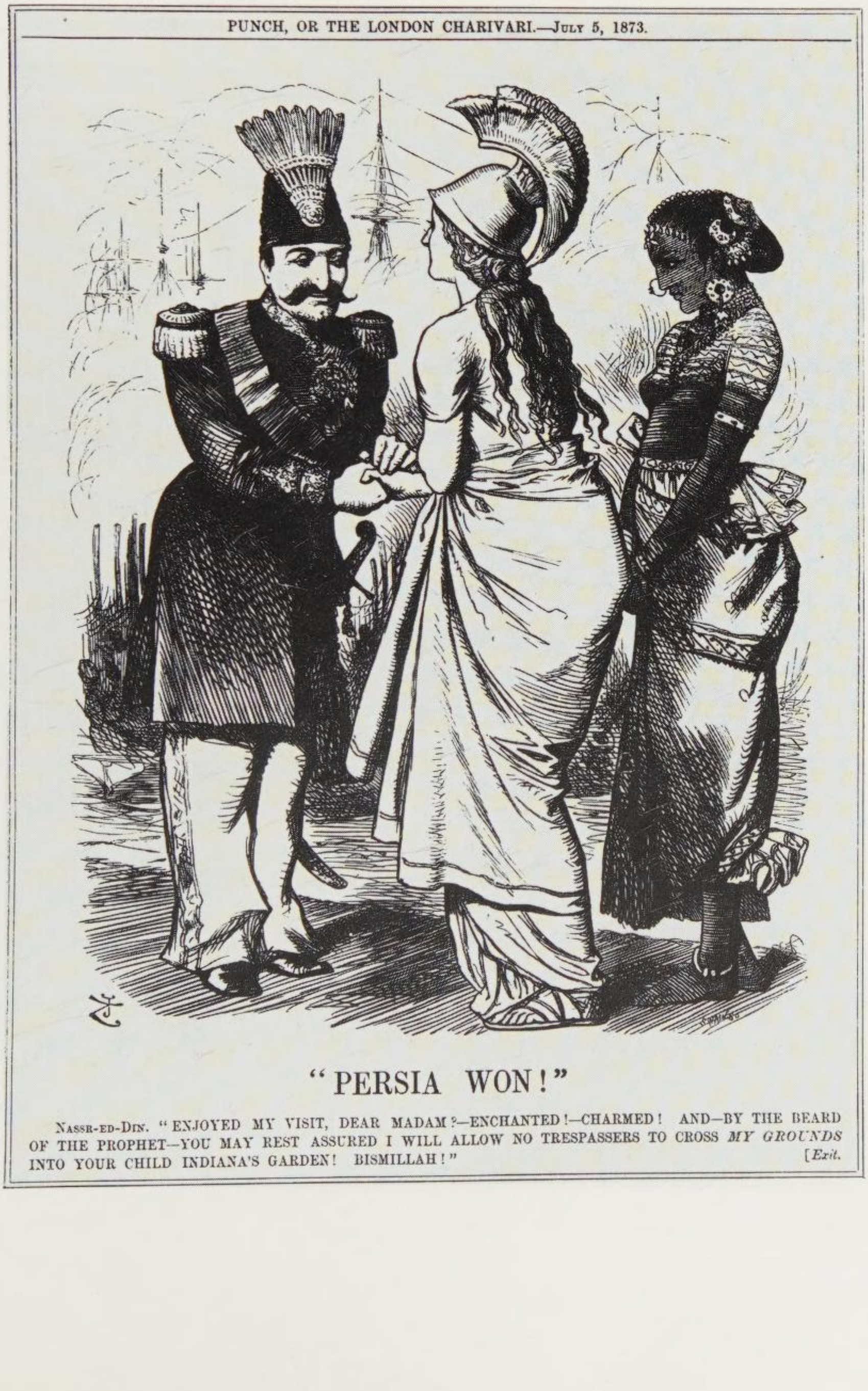
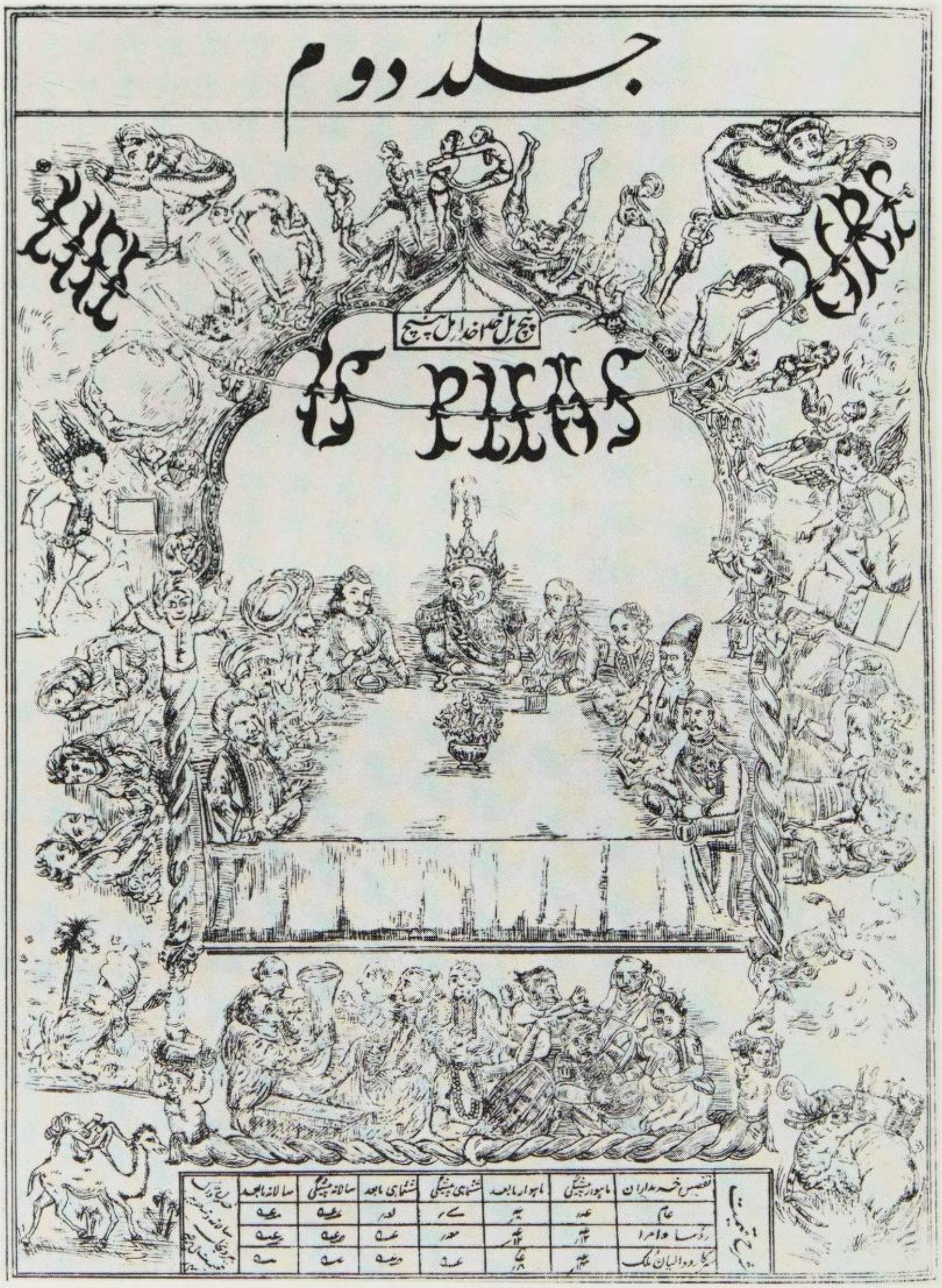
84 *The Indian Charivari* cover with dusky Oriental maidens in the manner of *Punch* (see Fig. 85). The 1873 cover was often used as here in 1877

readers. The ensign's progress was charted in the manner of 'Tom Raw the Griffin'.[55] Occasional Indian themes continued the romantic image of the Hindus as well as voicing a new disenchantment. A poem on 'The Suttee' (1852) dealt with a tender episode, the rescue of a young Hindu widow by the Mughal prince, Murad. The Indian crowd at the immolation scene gave the poet a chance to display his skill with the picturesque:


PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—JULY 5, 1873.
"PERSIA WON!"
NASSR-ED-DIN. "ENJOYED MY VISIT, DEAR MADAM?—ENCHANTED!—CHARMED! AND—BY THE BEARD OF THE PROPHET—YOU MAY REST ASSURED I WILL ALLOW NO TRESPASSERS TO CROSS *MY GROUNDS* INTO YOUR CHILD INDIANA'S GARDEN! BISMILLAH!" [*Exit.*

85 John Tenniel, *Persia Won*, *Punch*, 1873. Persia is a dusky Oriental maiden here

. . . Every one knows an English crowd,
With its jibes and mocks,
Pugilistic shocks,
Hisses and yells,
. . . All that can raise
An uproar most infernally loud;
So strange indeed must appear to us
A mob so remarkably decorous . . .



86 *Oudh Punch* cover, 1881

The poem's mixture of longing and regret for the child victim was in a tradition that went back to travel accounts of the past:

> . . . But when a young girl, not quite sixteen,
>
> Lovely in mien,
> With eyes that might melt a stone to affection,
> And but slightly dark in the way of complexion . . .[56]

The picturesque shades off into the romantic, suggesting the magazine's

87 *Basantak* cover, 1874

sympathy for the Orientalism of Jones, Munro and Elphinstone and its distrust of meddling liberals bent on 'civilising' Hindu society. In another cartoon, a high-handed British court dispenses justice to a bemused peasant who cannot comprehend its 'benefits'. However the earlier romanticism had by now developed an ambivalence evident in 'A Lament by One of the Deluded' (Fig. 88). There are also the first signs of hostility to westernised Indians. The magazine was barely seven years old when the upheaval of 1857 closed it down. After order was restored, its owner launched its successor, *The Indian Punch*. To efface painful memories the office moved to Meerut. Referring to the 'sad events', the chastened editor added, 'we have learned not to ridicule our best friends, "The Royals" [officials]'.[57]

When *The Indian Punch* returned to Delhi in 1863, the mood had turned sour, with deep suspicions of the westernised Indian and his mouthpiece, the nationalist journalist. Conventional wisdom views the growing anti-Indian feeling among the British as a reflection of the betrayal felt after 1857. While the Rebellion certainly exacerbated

88 *A Lament by One of the Deluded*, *Delhi Sketch Book*, V, 1854

feelings, the hardening of attitudes reflects the growing Victorian ideology of race. As early as 1853 the word 'nigger' occurs in *Delhi Sketch Book*. *The Indian Punch* cartoons, which placed the Indian next to the 'the savage African', underlined the low ranking of non-Europeans on the evolutionary ladder. The influential *Curry and Rice* (1859) remarked on the Indian's peculiar habit that he shared with the ape and the kangaroo. He could stand erect only on occasions, but if left alone, he immediately sank to the ground in a squatting position.[58] A more specific hostility to the educated Bengali was expressed by *The Indian Punch* in 'Native Charity', where he was held up as a devious hypocrite. Elsewhere he was prize meat, 'fattening up for the forthcoming agricultural and cattle show in Calcutta'.[59] This vividly contrasted with the indulgent treatment of English behaviour.

For witty exposés of Anglo-Indian manners, none could rival *Curry and Rice*, whose caricatures were also a yardstick of racial rancour. No doubt, its avowed aim was to squeeze maximum humour out of 'human imperfections'. The British were pretentious snobs while the German missionary laboured a ridiculous English accent. Yet, in the post-1857 atmosphere, what better examples of 'human imperfections' than Indians? Whether Atkinson reflected his own views or his wish to play to the gallery is not clear. The Indian servants, jokingly called 'slaves', were the silent witnesses to life at the 'station'. They were spared the ridicule reserved for the western-educated. Remarks about the latter were routinely interjected with the refrain: 'Niggers – ten thousand pardons, no, not niggers, I mean natives, Oriental gentlemen'. It mocked the English major invalidated out of the army, who failed to find a European bride. Atkinson dwelt at length on his Indian wife, 'a "darkie", a pure and unmitigated specimen of the pure Hindoo, one of those dusky daughters of the East that roll their effulgent orbs', and their black offspring. The same cultural hauteur was expressed with regard to Indian music, Indian residences, the nautch (idiotic, but graceful to the eastern eye), hideous little idols and sweets sold in the 'pigsty' of a bazaar. Yet there was much in the work that was witty and enjoyable. One of the most effective plates was of 'Our Ball' (Fig. 89), with its clever use of cultural contrasts:

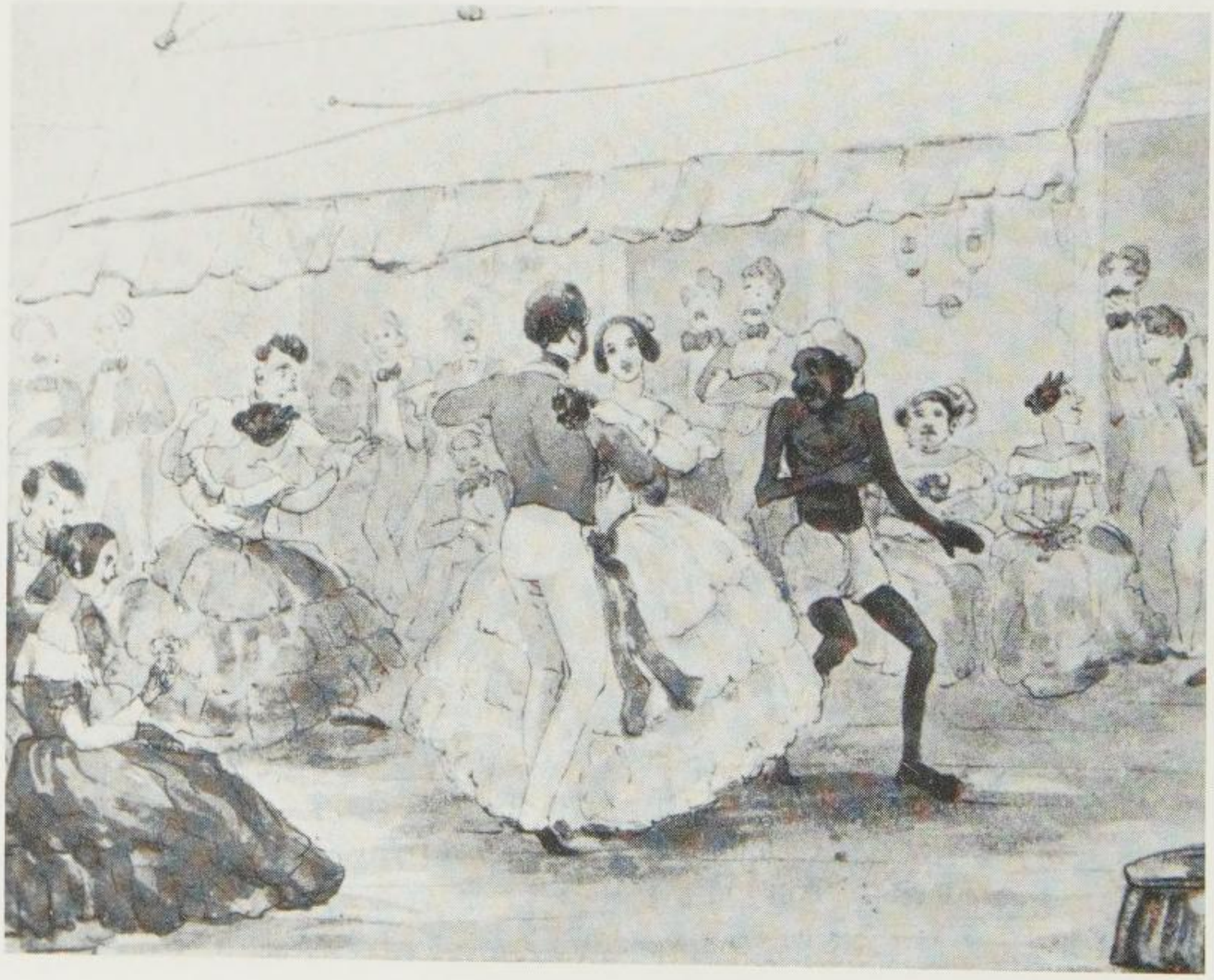
> gentle Barbara, her orbicular face radiant with delight, and plunging about like a dolphin in blue . . . and there ye Gods! look at that intruding Oriental, unadorned with over-much drapery, and with a soul set upon punkahs [fans], stalking complacently across the arena.[60]

Of all the English comic magazines of the period, *The Indian Charivari* was the most accomplished. It appeared in 1872 complete with an Indian version of Richard Doyle's famous *Punch* cover. The turbaned Mr Punch of Calcutta smokes a hubble-bubble while being entertained by dusky maidens in scanty clothing. The cover includes baby Punch being fed pale ale by an Indian nanny. Colonel Percy Wyndham, the owner of *The*

Indian Charivari, explained its appearance: 'even amongst the private community, Native and European, how often circumstances occur which present themselves in a most ludicrous light. It is our purpose . . . of supplying once a fortnight an Illustrated paper, reviewing current topics and matters of interest in a light playful spirit'.[61] Able artists, he claimed, were engaged but amateurs too were welcome. Since wood-engravers were in short supply, the magazine had resorted to lithography.

The Indian Charivari shared mild jokes about English social life with expatriate readers. Art exhibitions and other topical issues, treated in the style of *Punch*, were also included. One fails to discern any political consistency of the paper other than a general conservatism. It took a protectionist line in its cartoon of the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, a Liberal and supporter of free trade. He is depicted as a menacing bully who keeps India, a comely young woman, manacled. The semi-nude female personifying India, had its precedent in *Punch*; symbolic figures and personifications were the mainstay of political cartoons in the West. Other cartoons of Northbrook the bully include him dragging a reluctant Indian Nawab to be presented to the visiting Prince of Wales. *The Indian Charivari* also took over the *Delhi Sketch Book* practice of publishing witty poems based on Sanskrit literature.[62]

Although it was the caricatures of Indians that *The Indian Charivari* excelled in, it did not hold a uniform view on them. Given that nationalist agitations were on the rise, a special 'Charivari Album' (1875) offered

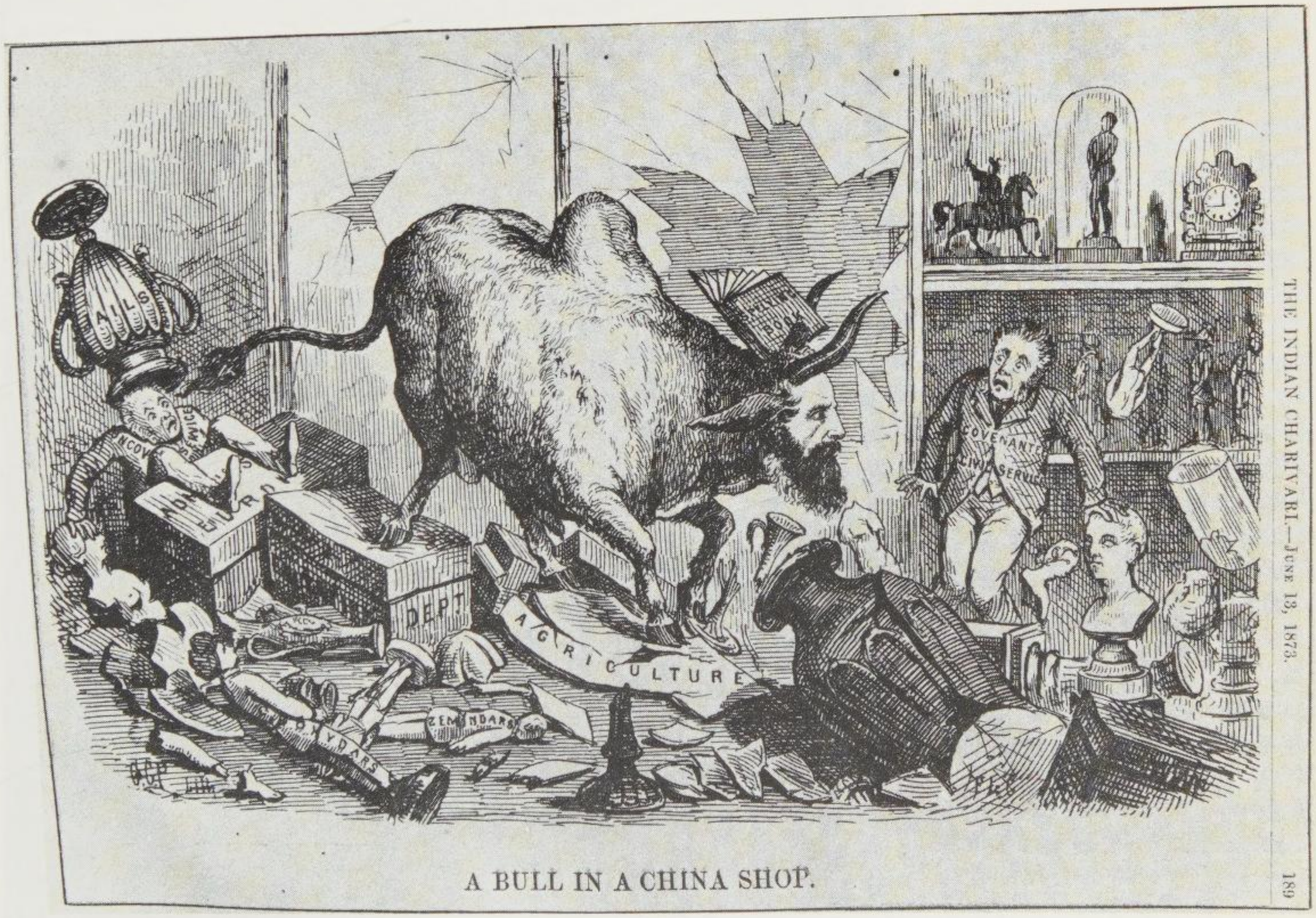


89 G.F. Atkinson: *Our Ball, Curry and Rice*, 1859

profiles of prominent loyal Indians, including Sir Salar Jung, the pro-western adviser to the Nizam. *Punch* endorsed the sentiment in 1876, with its own compliments to the Maharaja of Burdwan as a valued friend of the Raj. *The Charivari Album* displayed a soft spot for the controversial Rajendralala Mitra, despite his nationalist feuds with the indigo planters. The admiring profile may be explained by Mitra's close connection with the British Indian Association, dominated by the landed nobility. On the other hand, Sir Richard Temple, intensely disliked by the paper, was portrayed as a careerist. A mad bull in a china shop, he was wilfully destroying the racial equilibrium under Pax Britannica with his westernisation projects (Fig. 90).[63]

Reformers, whether political or social, whether English or Indian, bore the brunt of its sarcasm, although *The Indian Charivari* could not quite make up its mind about social reform. It sympathised with Keshab Sen. The leader of the Naba Bidhan (Progressive) Brahmo movement enjoyed a high reputation among Europeans. On the fierce controversy between the Ādi (Original) and the Progressive Brahmos, the journal took the side of the latter. Likewise, women's emancipation, advocated by the Indian

90 *A Bull in a China Shop*, *The Indian Charivari*, 1873



Reform Association, received its support. Yet on another occasion, reform attempts by Brahmos and their English allies were presented as at best misguided and at worst hypocritical (Fig. 91). Mary Carpenter was sympathetic to the Brahmo cause. Her condemnation of the purdah system during her visit to Bengal in the 1860s unleashed a vicious attack. A cartoon purported to show a black baboo keen to wed her. He held in his hand a wedding ring the size of a door knocker with the inscription 'with this ring I thee wed'. The caption explained: 'brother Ramdoss was delighted at the prospect of another visit from the philanthropist Miss Carpenter to find out about female education which amounted to

91 *The Modern 'Krishna'*, *The Indian Charivari*, 1875. Modern Kṛṣṇa seduces women by playing the magic tune 'education'. The cartoon cleverly uses the traditional iconography of the god

nothing. But Ramdoss had other hopes. Since she was so interested in Indian women he hoped her to take an interest in Hindu men. So he offered himself to be taken for better or worse'. The cartoonist hoped that he would succeed, for Miss Carpenter would then be confined once and for all to a zenana instead of meddling in other people's business. At the same time, *The Indian Charivari*'s racial ego was sensitive to native criticisms of Europeans. When the Bengali journal, *Saptāhik Paridarshan*, denounced European women as immodest in response to Annette Akroyd's work for female education in India, *The Indian Charivari* recommended that the magazine (its editor?) be horsewhipped.[64]

In the final analysis, the cutting edge of cartoons in *The Indian Charivari* was racial malice. Caricature thrives on consensus, on a shared culture: us versus them. The joke is shared and so is the hostility. Of two kinds of European caricature, lampoons of public figures or parodies of national characteristics, where the recognition of the individual is not involved, the cartoonist seizes upon stereotypes, or 'condensed' images of class, gender or race. The most memorable cartoons abbreviate, compress and fuse their material in order to make striking visual statements. The arresting quality of *The Indian Charivari* lay precisely in witty caricatures of the Bengali character. Many of its cartoons were clever, funny and a few were even brilliant. But the English magazine did not invent these sterotypes; it simply exploited the existing ones of the educated Bengali. These were so widely diffused among the English that their purported universality was expected to be enjoyed even by their victims. When some Indians failed to see the joke and withdrew their subscription, the magazine complained that 'an excessive thinness of skin is apt to be accompanied by excessive thickness of head'.[65]

The overtly racist cartoons, inspired by Darwinism, such as 'The English Lion and the Bengali Ape', were not so original. Although Africans were the prime candidates for the category of ape, it was successfully deployed against other groups such as the Irish. They were the English cartoonist's favourite Darwinian 'missing link', though 'The British Lion and the Irish Monkey' appeared in *Punch* in 1848, long before *On the Origin of Species* (1859). As the threat from the Sinn Fein intensified in the 1880s, Tenniel mirrored English public feeling in drawing the Irish as apes. *The Indian Charivari* cartoon may well reflect the fact that the Bengalis, vociferous like the Irish, were seen as a threat to Pax Britannica. It 'is next to impossible for a native of Bengal to look pleased because he always looks black', complained *The Indian Charivari*.[66] Race is also the topic of the cartoon of the dusky wife reeking of ghee and garlic, which marks the end of the age of the *Delhi Sketch Book*, yielding place to *Curry and Rice*. *The Indian Charivari* perorated on the horrors of marrying natives for the benefit of its women readers: to some Englishwomen, the Indian Princes might appear as a romantic catch, but once married, they would reveal their true uncouth and 'male chauvinist' nature.[67]

However, unlike the 'simian' Irish, the Bengali baboo was more a buffoon with touching cultural pretensions. In *Baboo Jabberjee B.A.* (Fig. 92), published in *Punch* (1895), F. Anstey unfolded the drolleries of a westernised Bengali. Jabberjee was 'head over heels in love with Art, and the possessor of two magnificent coloured lithographs, representing a steeplechase in the act of jumping a trench, and a water-nymph in the very *decolleté* undress of "puris naturalibus" '. Although Anstey had never met a real baboo, he used the 'baboo-language' with its malapropisms, confusion of English and Bengali syntaxes and bombastic phrases, to comical effect. In 1874 *The Indian Charivari* had created the quintessential baboo in Bhugvatti Bose M.A., whose purported 'letters' appeared in the magazine; these cleverly exploited the Bengali habit of translating a Bengali idiom literally into English. For example, when Bhugvatti mentioned someone taking 'lessons near me', what he actually meant was 'taking lessons with me'.[68]

The resentment against educated Hindus, especially the bhadralok, was deep-seated. The welfare of the Indian peasantry fitted in well with Raj paternalism, while the bhadralok formed a competitive and disaffected intelligentsia. Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 promised equal treatment to all subjects which spurred the Bengali elite to compete for higher positions in the imperial bureaucracy. Surendranath Banerjea was one of the first Indians to challenge the English monopoly of the Indian Civil Service. Having entered the ICS in the teeth of Anglo-Indian opposition, Banerjea was soon dismissed on a flimsy charge. When he was forced to resign in 1874, *The Indian Charivari* joined in insinuations about his honesty and competence. 'The Baboo Ballads', published in the same year, wove its theme around the ambitions of educated Bengalis of competing for the ICS examination. Jabberjee in *Punch* demanded that not only the ICS but also the Poet Laureateship be thrown open to Indians.[69]

The Indian Charivari took pot shots at nationalist papers that attacked the British monopoly of the ICS. It systematically impugned the character of the bhadralok, their lack of integrity and crass incompetence. The bhadralok values were at serious odds with the English public school ethos of manliness and sportsmanship (Fig. 93). Macaulay offered his verdict, 'The physical organisation of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid'.[70] Kipling's Bengali District Officer was not only incompetent but a coward to boot. Only British guardianship, and not educated baboodom, was capable of holding the warlike communities in India at bay. The Viceroy Lytton spoke his mind on this:

> The Baboos, whom we have educated to write semi-seditious articles in the Native Press . . . really represent nothing but the social anomaly of their own position . . . For most forms of administrative employment [they appear] to me quite unfit . . .[71]

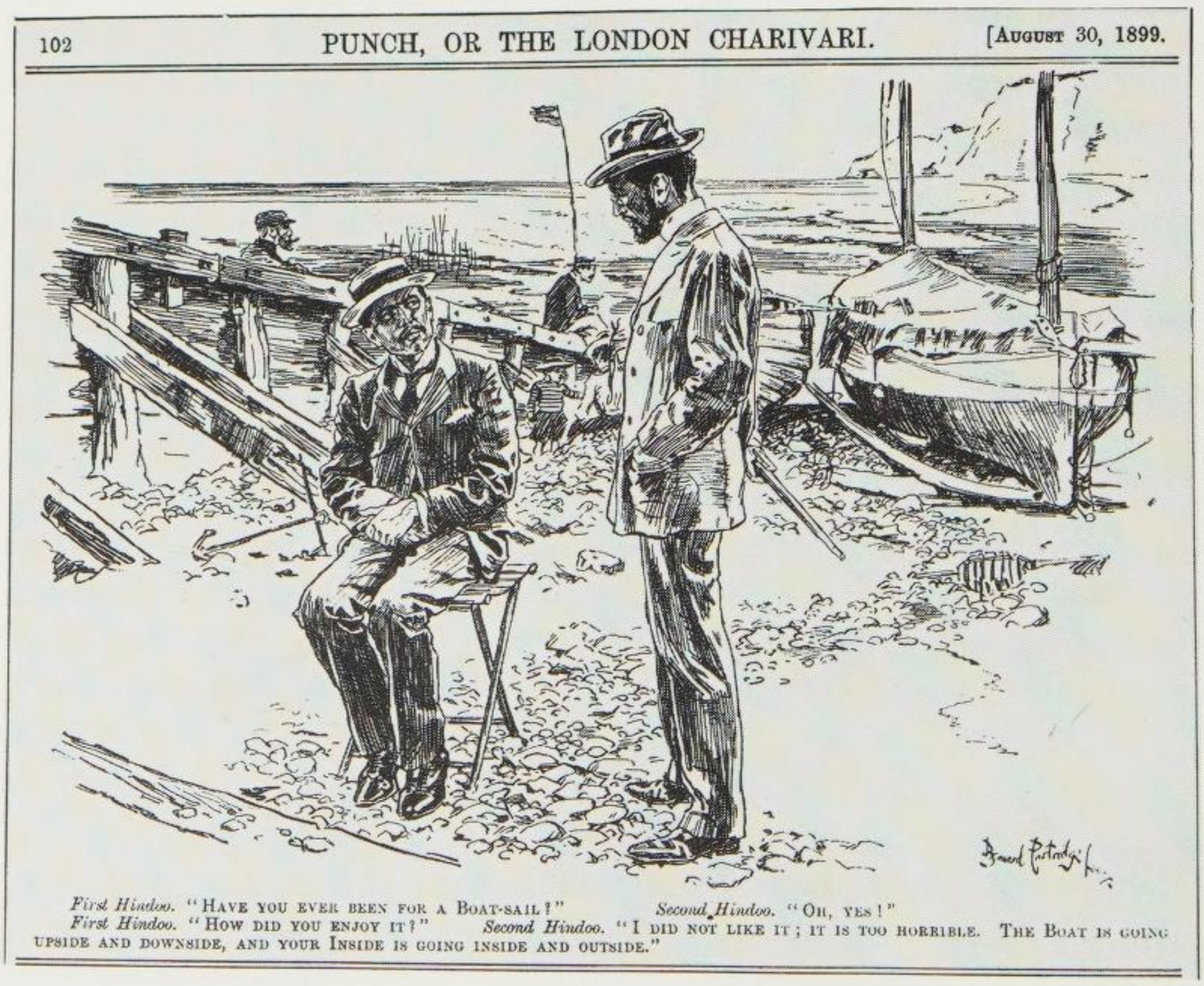
"It was here," I said, reverently, "that the Swan of Avon was hatched!"

92 *Baboo Jabberjee BA*, *Punch*, 1895

As he made it clear: 'It is one thing to admit the public into your park, and quite another thing to admit it into your drawing room . . . Already great mischief has been done by the deplorable tendency of second-rate Indian officials, and superficial English philanthropists to ignore the essential and insurmountable distinctions of race qualities, which are fundamental to our position in India . . .'.[72] Anstey portrayed Jabberjee as a cowardly knave in the confidence that he gave no offence to the Indians who mattered.

From the 1870s, Bengali journalists began to combat British taunts by making counter-claims of cultural superiority. Recently India's Aryan connection had been publicised by no less a person than Max Müller, Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford. *The Indian Charivari* dismissed such claims with ridicule. The figure of Muddle (Madan?) Baboo, the Aryan brother of Mrs Malaprop, was conjured up. 'We may have Brute Force on our side, but Mind belongs to the "Oppressed"', it sneered. It mimicked the *Hindoo Patriot* and other Bengali papers with, 'how empty are the boasts of Western civilisation'.[73] 'We all know that the Baboo is our superior in intellectual power', mocked the editor, comparing 'the truthful Bengali and the Deceitful Anglo-Saxon', in an allusion to the stereotype of the dissembling oriental.[74]

Bhugvatti Bose was a harmless clown, but it was the lobbying, protesting, petitioning, political baboo who drew *The Indian Charivari*'s ire. On the occasion of the Vienna International Exhibition of 1873, the


102 PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI. [AUGUST 30, 1899.
First Hindoo. "HAVE YOU EVER BEEN FOR A BOAT-SAIL?" Second Hindoo. "OH, YES!"
First Hindoo. "HOW DID YOU ENJOY IT?" Second Hindoo. "I DID NOT LIKE IT; IT IS TOO HORRIBLE. THE BOAT IS GOING UPSIDE AND DOWNSIDE, AND YOUR INSIDE IS GOING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE."

93 *Two Hindoos*, *Punch*, 1899, on Hindu lack of manliness

magazine proposed sending a live baboo as an exhibit. A 'talking machine' that mixed conceit with sedition, he took pleasure in vilifying his rulers to whom he owed his existence. The Bengali confused cheek with allowable independence. Unless corrected early, it led to intolerable results in the fully developed patriot: 'because they can talk broken English, they [think] they are as good as if not a great deal better than Englishmen'.[75] A hostile verse captures the lilt and accent of English spoken by Bengalis:

> Bapre! this time you have made too beautiful picture of me,
> Charivari Bahadur, isquatting on branch of the tree;
> Very fine creature; don't know where you are finding its match;
> Beautiful tongue to iscreech, splendid nails to iscratch!
> Patriot calls himself, and newspaper business make,
> Telling that all Bengal was made for zamindar's sake,
> First got caught by Sarkar, then wrote in Native Press,
> Plenty *gali* [abuse] of Shaheb, and meet with great success,
> Setting up lots newspapers, *Patrikas*, *Patriots*, *Duts*,
> Daily write Baboos are Angels, Anglo-saxons are brutes.
> Always told that poor Bengalees cruel oppressed,
> This way making Cockney *shaheblogue* much distressed;
> Told that I too patriotic, don't want to pay any tax,
> Poor native country ruined, plundered of lakhs and lakhs;
> Why not giving to Baboo all good posts and good pay?
> Give whole Bengal to Editor-Baboos, and then go away!
> Too much education you give? Then more fool you –
> Cannot expect the gratitude from parrot-monkey Baboo.
> Therefore I sit on branch and show to Sarkar Bahadur 'ill-will',
> And make the talk to deny it, and all the same show it istill;
> Write too much eloquent article, hatred of *Shaheblogue* preach,
> The patriot-Baboo business – to make the iscratch and iscreech.[76]

Nothing made the comic magazine more livid than the relentless complaints of the highly articulate Indian newspapers, *Hindoo Patriot* and *Amrita Bāzār Patrikā*, wittily christened the 'Hindoo Howler' and 'Scurrilous Bazar Patrika'. *The Indian Charivari* felt especially proprietorial about *Punch*:

> There is perhaps no objection to the Hindoo Patriot publishing weak pieces of buffoonery if it finds it pays it to do so, but it has no right to desecrate an honoured name heading them 'Punchiana' – at least as long as it considers it the correct thing to embellish pages with indecent *post mortems* fished out of other papers for the gratification of that refined Baboodom of which it is – fitting representative.[77]

Mookerjee's Magazine (1872) engaged precisely in such post mortems. *The Times* (London) and the Anglo-Indian presses were highly incensed by its campaign against Lytton's Dramatic Performances Bill (1876), aimed at curbing inflammatory material. The paper had also backed Rajendralala

Mitra against Albrecht Weber, when the Indian challenged the Orientalist's claim that the *Rāmāyaṇa* had derived its inspiration from Homer. *Mookerjee's Magazine* was one of the earliest Indian-owned magazines to contain lithographic cartoons, such as 'India Presenting a Coronal to Lord Northbrook on the Abolition of the Income Tax' (Fig. 94), 'A Modern Avatār' and 'A Phantasmagoria'. But these elaborate political allegories by D. D. Dhar did not match the verve of the editorials.[78]

Mookerjee's Magazine soon perished. When glancing at these 'serio-comic' papers we cannot fail to notice that cartoons do not always make us laugh; they, as often with *Punch*, simply offer political comments. The topical allusions that meant a lot to the contemporaries have long ceased to matter. Hence it is difficult to tell how influential they were.[79] Unlike

94 *India Presenting a Coronal to Lord Northbrook, Mookerjee's Magazine*, II, 1873

most of the comic magazines, *Hindi Punch* (1878–1930), enjoyed a long life. In response to demand, every year a selection of its cartoons was reprinted in an album. Founded as *Parsi Punch* by N. D. Apyakhtiyar, it was taken over at his death by Barjorjee Naorosji. He renamed it *Hindi Punch* and gave it his unique stamp. In 1905 the *Manchester Guardian* found it to be as familiar as Tenniel and yet strange, its humour forceful though moderate. If 'these cartoons appeal to the avarage Hindu', wrote the paper in compliment, 'he must be credited with a sense of humour and quite average intelligence. It is possible that if such an annual were distributed among MPs the India budget might find an unwontedly full and decently interested House'. The *Melbourne Punch* welcomed the 'queerest publication' and 'Panchoba' – a cross between Punch and a Hindu deity.[80]

'Panchoba' and 'Hind', which stood for India in *Hindi Punch*, were often used in conjunction with public figures to comment on current political situations. In 1898 India was depicted as a holy cow in 'Patience on a Monument'. In addition to *Punch*-inspired drawings, the paper also cleverly adapted popular prints such as those of Ravi Varma. To take an example here, Lord Curzon is Sarasvatī, the Hindu goddess of learning, in a parody of his address to the education conference at Simla (Fig. 95). As also Fig. 96 shows, Curzon had the distinction of being deified by *Hindi*

95 *Left* *On the Heights of Simla*, *Hindi Punch*, 1905. Curzon's inflated self-image is caricatured as Sarasvati, the Hindu goddess of learning. The iconography is that of Ravi Varma (see p. 217) whose popular prints inspired a number of cartoons in the magazine

96 *Propitiating Shri Ganesha*, Curzon the victim of another cartoon which shows him as the elephant-headed god of good fortune who needs to be propitiated (from H. A. Talcherkar, *Lord Curzon in Indian Caricature*, Bombay 1902)

ON THE HEIGHTS OF SIMLA.

"I am the Incarnation of Saraswati—i—i—i! And all should worship me—e—e—!"
Me—e—e—e! Me—e—e—e! Me—e—e—e!

[Lord Curzon gave a farewell address at Simla on Wednesday last (Sept. 20) at the Conference of the Directors of Public Instruction, in which he reviewed the incidents of the Campaign of Education during the last seven years.]

[*Hindi Punch, Sept., 1905.*]

Hindi Punch] PROPITIATING SHRI GANESHA. [Sept. 1899.

Punch. In the West, the use of visual metaphors for making a political point was a cartoonist's stock in trade.[81]

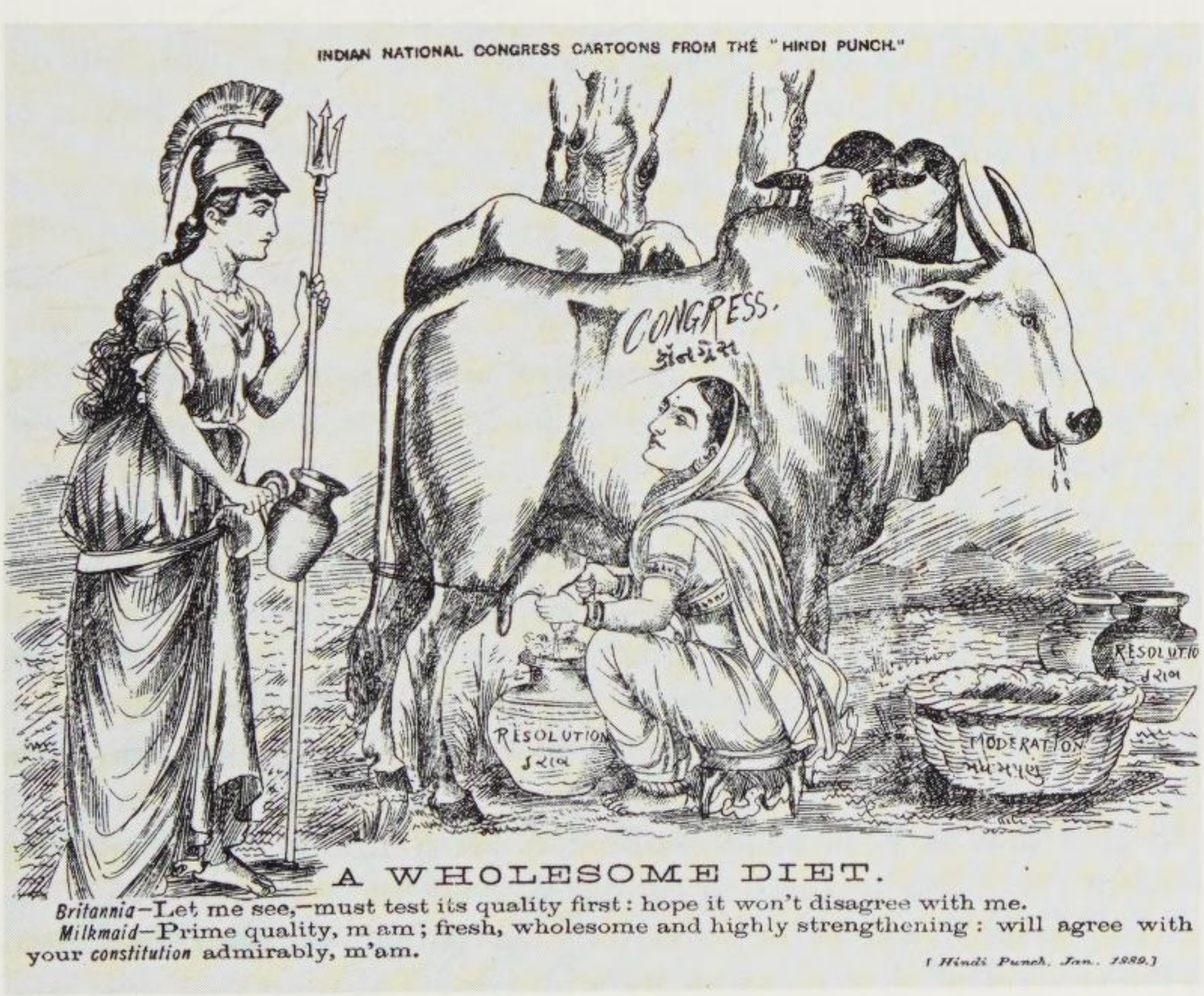
Before World War I, *Hindi Punch* seldom covered world events, with the rare exception of Japan's defeat of Russia in 1905, when it shared its elation at the Asian victory with other Indian nationalists. The paper showed a unity of style and purpose throughout its existence, faithfully covering the annual resolutions of the Congress and its evolution into a political force. The first fifteen years of the Congress (1885–1900) were dominated by Moderate nationalists who were loyal to the empire, a sentiment shared by the magazine. Their main demands were for greater consultative powers within the Raj and wider opportunities in the ICS. In other words, at this stage they had neither the means nor the desire to overthrow the imperium but sought to make it more sensitive to public opinion. Above all, they wished to demonstrate their worthiness for democracy by espousing institutional politics. To reassure the government of its moderate intentions, a copy of the magazine was sent to the India Office. Naorosji received its guarded approval with the comment that the paper was necessarily one-sided.[82]

The very first cartoons (1887–9) gingerly broached India's right to political representation, informing Queen Victoria of the birth of the Congress and of Indian public opinion. On Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, professions of loyalty were made at the twelfth session of the Congress. *Hindi Punch* marked the occasion with the cartoon, 'Before Her Ever-Affectionate Mother', in line with Victoria's maternal image throughout the empire. A major platform of the early Congress was to appeal directly to the fairness of the British public and force concessions by lobbying in London. Dadabhai Naoroji took up residence in the city. In 1888, standing on a Liberal ticket in Finsbury Central, he became the first Indian Member of Parliament. Lord Salisbury, leader of the Conservative Party, opposed Naoroji's nomination, confident that British voters would not return a black man; to him, the Irish, the Orientals and the Hottentots were inferior species. In his reply, Gladstone characterised the Marquis as 'blacker' than the Indian. *Hindi Punch*, too, felt offended by the slur, promptly issuing the cartoon, 'Save Us from Pollution'. In 1889, 'A Wholesome Diet' (Fig. 97) depicted a cow being milked by a young woman. Britannia wondered if the milk (Indian nationalism) was wholesome. The milkmaid reassured her: yes, it would agree with her constitution.[83]

At the end of the century, Moderates were challenged by Extremists in the Congress over social reforms. The controversy took precedence in the magazine. Unlike the Moderates, Tilak (1864–1920) and the Extremists saw the British as disrupting perennial Hindu values. Such sentiment coincided with burgeoning Hindu national identity. Reforms stirred up deep passions. 'The Patent Incubator' complained of the slow results of the Social Conference, the adjunct to the Congress sessions. *Punch's* Indian

'cousin', Panchoba, encouraged both the Congress and the Social Conference, in keeping with the magazine's liberal sympathies. In 1891 these conflicts came to a head over the age of consent issue. Moderates under Gokhale (1866–1915) wished to raise the marriagable age of Hindu girls from ten to twelve; the Extremists, who were for the status quo, lined up behind Tilak. A cartoon showed him with a sandal-paste mark on his forehead to ward off the evil eye, an ironic(?) reference to his role within the Congress. *Hindi Punch* however disapproved of the in-fighting itself, scolding the two factions as 'Bellicose Goats'. Among other early sketches, Ripon the Liberal Viceroy appeared as an angelic *putto*, while the mounting army expenditure which allegedly fell on Indian peasants was likened to a pelican devouring fishes. The comic magazine never lost its admiration for the social reformers: in 1900 the judge and reformer, Ranade (1841–1901), was a clever coppersmith in his efforts to weld ancient and modern India together; in 1904, Phirozeshah Mehta (1845–1915), the Moderate Congress President, was shown bearing 'The Lion's Burden'. Naorosji also praised the social reforms of the Gaekwad of Baroda.[84]

The rift within the Congress became irrevocable after Curzon's Partition of Bengal in 1905. *Hindi Punch*, drawn into the crisis, printed 'The Great Partitioner of India'. In keeping with its liberal sympathies, the paper blamed caste as the 'partitioner' rather than Curzon's unpopular measure.[85] The Viceroy's address to the Calcutta University immediately


INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS CARTOONS FROM THE "HINDI PUNCH."
CONGRESS.
કૉંગ્રેસ
RESOLUTION
MODERATION
A WHOLESOME DIET.
Britannia—Let me see,—must test its quality first: hope it won't disagree with me.
Milkmaid—Prime quality, m am; fresh, wholesome and highly strengthening: will agree with your constitution admirably, m'am.
[Hindi Punch, Jan., 1889.]

97 *A Wholesome Diet, Hindi Punch*, 1889. An early cartoon reassuring the Raj of the peaceful intentions of the Congress

before the Partition had rekindled the unrest that had been smouldering since his measures against the University and the Calcutta Corporation:

> I say that the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a western conception . . . Undoubtedly truth took a high place in the moral codes of the West before it had been similarly honoured in the East, where craftiness and diplomatic wile have always been held in much repute . . .[86]

Hindi Punch joined in the uproar following the speech, producing several cartoons against the calumny. Introducing truth to India, it said in a cartoon dated March 1905, was like carrying coals to Newcastle. By now the Viceroy had become thoroughly unpopular with the intelligentsia, many of whom were behind Kitchener in the famous Curzon–Kitchener controversy. *Hindi Punch* was no exception.[87]

The worsening political situation did not diminish the moderate magazine's loyalty to the Raj. It treated gently the reception given to the visiting Prince and Princess of Wales by the ladies of Bombay. In another sketch, 'Reading the Horoscope', India personified predicts the political future before the visiting royalty. *Hindi Punch*, as in 'The Ear-Opener', continued to believe in the need to 'reach the ears and touch the hearts of the great English people', as opposed to Raj officials. A village barber takes the wax out of John Bull's ears, which would let him hear the Indian demands better.[88]

As the nationalist movement entered a phase of widespread unrest and terrorism, *Hindi Punch* fell out of step with mainstream politics. It lived on beyond Mahatma Gandhi's *satyāgraha* movement in the 1920s, but the mass upheaval did not inspire any powerful cartoons. The mirror of another era, *Hindi Punch* had outlived its usefulness.[89]

Cartoon traditions in the vernacular

The Oudh Punch, in Urdu, was a pioneer comic magazine of north India. In 1881, when Archibald Constable published a selection of its cartoons, he reassured himself that the profusion of comic magazines in India dispelled the myth that orientals were devoid of humour. Muhammad Sajjad Husain of Lucknow, who preferred independence to a desk job, brought out the magazine in 1877. By 1881 its sales figures had reached the 500 mark. Many of the lithographic cartoons were copied from *Punch*, *Fun* and other English magazines. But the most interesting ones were clever modifications of the English cartoons as well as original drawings. Its regular cartoonist, Ganga Sahai (pen-name Shauq, a Hindu artist) designed the cover in imitation of *Punch*. He contributed as a draughtsman at the Exhibition of Industrial Art in Lucknow (1881).[90]

The Oudh Punch focused not only on politics but also on special problems and dealt even-handedly with Hindu–Muslim riots over cow

slaughter. It used literary allusions as in the West; a clever one, namely, Rāma bending Śiva's bow to win Sītā's hand, parodied Lord Lytton's Afghan expedition of 1878–80. 'Rebellion Had Bad Luck (1881)', paraphrasing Tenniel's cartoon in *Punch* (16.12.1865), drew an analogy between British treatment of Indian and Irish nationalists (Figs 98, 99). The cartoon, which alluded to an incident at the engineering college in Bengal, portrayed the Director of Public Instruction of Bengal as John Bull; he had sent down the student leaders after a political demonstration at the college.[91]

Of cartoons that make human follies an object of amusement, few were more striking than the ones from Bengal, the earliest of which appeared during the Bengal Renaissance. Satirical papers existed in Bengal prior to the 1870s, but illustrated ones appeared close on the heels of *The Indian Charivari* (1873). Though Bengali artists learned from it, they were closer in spirit to Gillray and Cruikshank than to *Punch*. If they happened to choose the same victims as *The Indian Charivari*, the western-educated Bengalis, their purpose was very different.

Bengali cartoonists embarked on a savage and yet playful game of self-mockery. Wit and innuendo, used in caricature to expose pretension, are symptoms of heightened individualism. Caricature, a prime device for parodying contemporary manners, gave this lively, self-absorbed milieu a new weapon to turn on itself.[92] The cartoons inherited an earlier tradition of literary parodies; they were the pictorial equivalents of *Naba Bābu Bilās*, *Naba Bibi Bilās*, Kali Prasanna Sinha's brilliant *Hutam Penchār Nakshā* and similar satirical works. This self-critical undertow existed throughout the Bengal Renaissance: the 'alter ego' of the westernised bhadralok. Significantly, criticisms of modern ideas emanated not from traditional groups, but from within the urban elite itself. Social satires and cartoons exposed the ambiguities of the love–hatred relationship that characterised bhadralok society – an exclusive and yet divided group, divided because traditional signs of status were no longer sacrosanct. And yet the insults and the ridicule heaped upon bhadralok values by the satirist were a token of his commitment to his literate culture. When the Bengali cartoonist pilloried his countrymen he was in fact taking them into his confidence. His victims were invariably his most appreciative audience.[93]

Harbola Bhānd (1874), one of the first comic magazines, exposed furtive drinking among the westernised. Their conscience, insinuated the cartoon, was salved by pretending that the brandy bought from the chemist had medicinal value.[94] The short-lived publication made way for the famous *Basantak*, inspired by *Punch*. An obscenely fat Brahmin – Punch transmogrified no less – leers out of its cover, while the scenes around are of the utter depravity to which Calcutta had sunk: 'bibendum' baboodom and courting English couples. This scurrilous, irreverent paper, edited by Prannath Datta (1840–88), lasted two years. From a leading Calcutta

family, Prannath preferred to work under Rajendralala Mitra than to join the colonial bureaucracy.[95]

The title *Basantak* means a clown (*Vidusak*) in Sanskrit. The Bengali word 'basanta' also has the dual meaning of the season of spring and the dread infection, smallpox. Prannath put out his *zamadar* (sweeper) as the owner of the journal. This was less to seek protection against his victims in anonymity than to play a further trick on his readers. He left enough clues in the paper to enable his readers to spot the real author. *Basantak* targeted

98 *Rebellion Had Bad Luck*, *Oudh Punch*, 1881. This protest against government intervention in education is highlighted by the adaptation of a *Punch* cartoon on the Irish (see Fig. 99)

colonial officials and their Indian allies, presenting public men in the guise of mythological figures. The humour rested on allusions to the divine lovers, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, for instance: the love of high British officials for their Bengali allies, *Basantak* implied, displayed similar intensity. There was a coarse immediacy in his nephew Girindrakumar's drawing that suited Prannath's savage invective. Hard-hitting satires included crushing of the Indian handloom by Manchester textiles, the corruption of Calcutta's civic administration and the mismanagement of official famine

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—December 16, 1865.
JAMAICA
"REBELLION HAD BAD LUCK."
John Bull. "THERE, GET OUT! DON'T LET ME SEE YOUR UGLY FACE AGAIN FOR TWENTY YEARS; AND THANK YOUR STARS YOU WERE STOPPED IN TIME!"

99 John Tenniel: *Rebellion Had Bad Luck*, *Punch*, 1865

relief. In '23rd special dispatch from the Famine districts' (Fig. 100), English officials force-feed overfed candidates, while the rest of the population starves. The caption reads: 'Beggar: Your honours, I really can't manage any more. Their Honours: We are afraid that won't do, someone must finish so much rice'.[96]

100 *The 23rd special dispatch, Basantak*

Basantak became embroiled in political factionalism around 1875, as

part of emergent nationalist politics. In the last century, the bhadralok population of Calcutta was divided into the leading families (*abhijāt*) and ordinary householders (*grihasta*). The Calcutta Corporation was run by a government-appointed chairman who also happened to be the Police Commissioner. In 1863 the system was slightly Indianised with the nomination of Indian aristocrats as Justices of the Peace. With the growth of public opinion in the 1870s, the 'householders' consisting of small landholders, clerks, schoolteachers and journalists began to tire of their political impotence. Their chance to challenge the zamindars came with the elevation of Temple to the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal.[97]

In 1875, keen on the spread of western institutions, Temple was prepared to defuse Bengali demands with limited political rights. The *grihasta* were offered a share in local government; as an elected body, they would more willingly pay taxes, urgently needed for modern amenities in Calcutta. The 'householders' warmly welcomed Temple's proposal, since they now had a chance to replace the conservative lobby with radical elements. The Europeans in Calcutta, too, wished to replace the control of the landed magnates with an elected body. Unexpectedly, they allied with the 'householders', as *The Indian Charivari* joined hands with *Basantak*. *The Indian Charivari* depicted two prominent English members of the Municipal Corporation, Roberts and Hogg, as a Muslim and a Brahmin. They relaxed with a hookah, while their supporter Wilson, the editor of a local newspaper, fanned them, and the pro-zamindar Kristo Das Pal served them with betel.[98]

The battle lines were clearly drawn. *Basantak* claimed to defend the interests of the ordinary citizen of Calcutta against the officials, the landed magnates and their mouthpiece, the *Hindoo Patriot*, edited by Kristo Das Pal. A defender of the *grihasta*, it waged relentless war against the modernisation projects of the Corporation, since improvements, such as covered drains, tramways, a modern market and other amenities, were to come out of the ratepayer's pocket. It sided with the 'man in the street' when the laying of covered drains caused discomfort to the pedestrians: one of them is shown using his umbrella to shelter himself against the mud splashed by a passing carriage. In one cartoon, Sir Stewart Hogg, Chairman of the Corporation and Police Commissioner, is a trickster who makes millions vanish in the name of improvement. In another, he is the Boar Incarnation of Viṣṇu (Fig. 101). In this satirical version of the Hindu pantheon, the tusks of the deity holds up various boons: tramways, drainage, a modern public market; while one of his arms wields the rod of authority, the police. He tramples underfoot Calcutta citizens as he receives worship from a sycophantic Bengali Justice of the Peace. The synonyms, 'boar' and 'hog' (Hogg), did not escape the readers.[99]

The Bengali Justice of the Peace here was a zamindar. Their spokesman in the Governor's Council, Kristo Das Pal, fought the extension of franchise to the 'householders'. As politics became more complex, the

zamindars chose Pal to represent them. Of humble origin, Pal was a brilliant speaker and journalist, who edited the *Hindoo Patriot* from 1861. He rose to be a Justice of the Peace and Commissioner of the Calcutta Municipality, eventually joining the exclusive Governor's Council. On his death at forty-one, a statue in his honour was erected with public subscription. Pal's opposition to the *grihastas* drew out *Basantak*'s sharp claws, which branded him as a government 'collaborator' – Temple's pet hound, no less (Fig. 102). Interestingly, political enmity did not tarnish personal amity. Pal is said to have asked Datta in jest, 'Do you always empty your inkpot when drawing me?'[100]

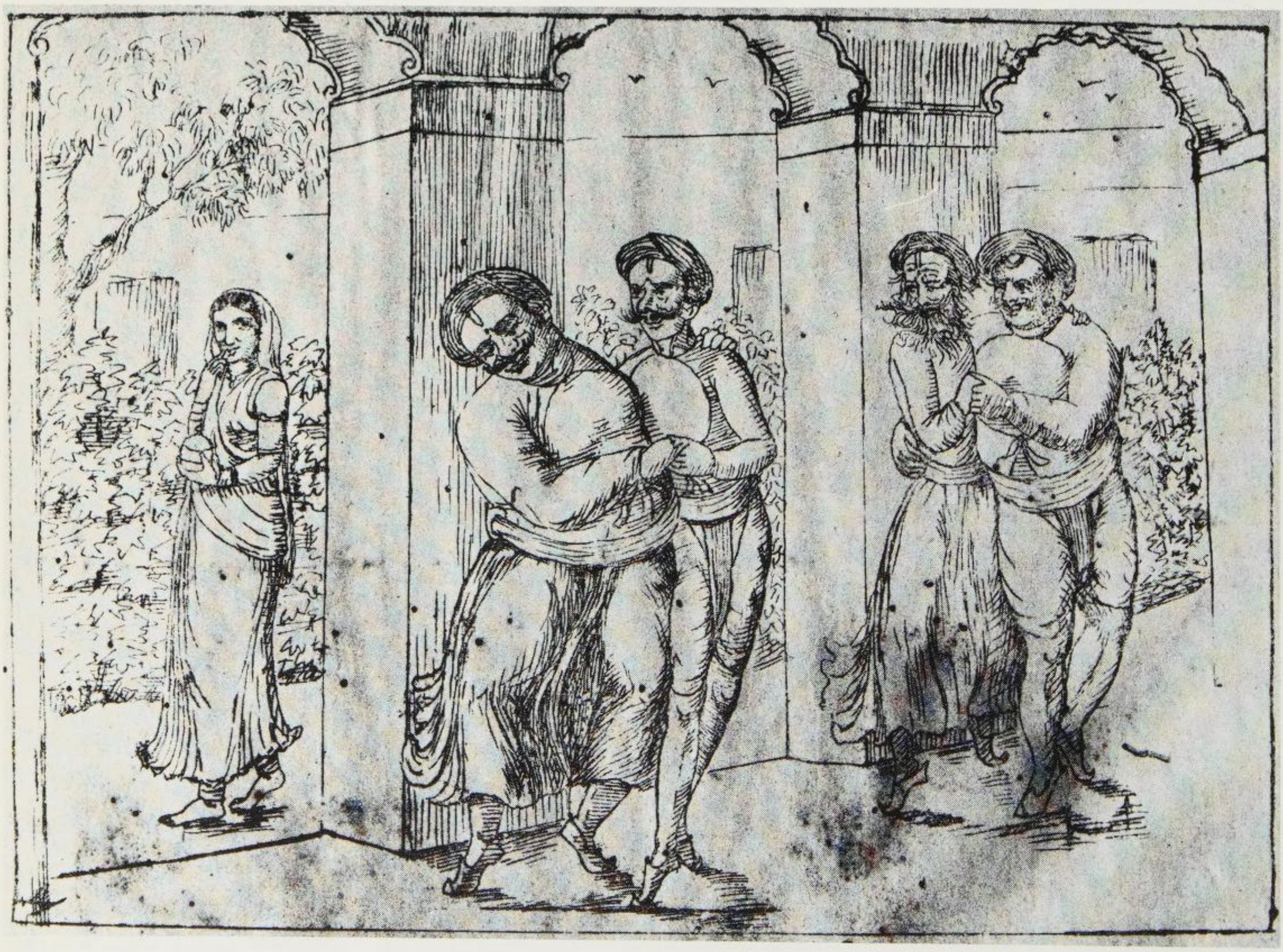
101 *Varaha Avatar, Basantak*

Basantak reserved its most lethal barbs for the westernised, in satires reminiscent of Kalighat. In 'Native Preparations for Jaymangal Singh's Ball' (Fig. 103), two pairs of *bania* (merchant) men practise the waltz, while a veiled woman looks on, bemused. Datta's targets included Vidyasagar's 'Society for the Prevention of Obscenity' (Fig. 104), purporting to celebrate the change that had come about. In conventional iconography, the naked goddess Kālī with dishevelled hair stands on the god Śiva. Here she wears a blouse and a modest, pleated, full-length skirt in deference to the reformer. She also carries a lady's handbag. Her supine victim sports a pair of tweed trousers with braces. The cartoonist makes fun of both the campaign for modest female attire and the prevailing fashion in Victorian clothes. But Datta admired Vidyasagar. His *The Bull and the Frog* mocks the foremost novelist Bankim Chatterjee's presumed

102 *Temple's Pet Hound, Basantak*

challenge to the great reformer. Filled with hubris, Bankim bullfrog tries to inflate to the size of Vidyasagar, the majestic bull, with the danger of bursting. Nor did *Basantak* spare the bhadralok indulgence in western food and drink, a focus of satire since Iswar Gupta, the noted poet (1812–59). It parodied the Christmas celebration of the *babus*, which was an excuse for overeating forbidden foods, for getting drunk on sherry and champagne, and for debauchery. Conservative *Basantak* never forgave Jagadananda Mukherjee, who had allowed the Prince of Wales to be received by the woman of his family.[101]

The most popular Bengali cartoons were social. The magazines *Prabāsi* and *Bhārati* had occasional cartoons, but in *Mānasi o Marmabāni*, *Bhārat Barsha* and *Māsik Basumati* they featured regularly. The stock Bengali characters – hypocritical zamindar, henpecked husband, pompous professor, obsequious clerk, illiterate Brahmin – were the cartoonists' favourites. Characteristic behaviours and typical situations, such as the plump head-clerk returning from the bazaar with his favourite fish or the thin schoolmaster with stick-like arms and legs were well captured.[102] The



103 *Native Preparations for Jaymangal Singh's Ball, Basantak*

ubiquitous umbrella was not only a protection against the fierce Bengal sun but also the all-purpose weapon of the Bengali hero.[103] The painter Abanindranath Tagore tried his hand at caricatures of favourite Bengali characters at various times in his career (Fig. 105). They were lively though never attaining the brilliance of his brother Gaganendranath's cartoons (see p. 174–5).[104]

From 1917, Jatin Sen featured regularly in *Mānasi o Marmabāni* and *Bhārat Barsha*, and occasionally in *Prabāsi*. Sen's observation of Bengali physiognomic types, blending individual idiosyncrasies with national peculiarities, was unmatched for the period. The works of Jaladhar Sen, Charuchandra Roy, Apurba Krishna Ghosh, Benoy Ghosh and Chanchal Bandopadhaya seem coarse by comparison. A student at the art school, Sen turned to cartoons, graphic art and cinema hoardings after failing to make headway in oriental art (see ch. 8). A chance meeting with a literary genius, Rajsekhar Bose, led to Sen's prize-winning graphic work and posters for Bose's chemical firm. Sen joined Bose's literary circle, while his cartoons inspired Bose's brilliant satirical works, *Gaddālikā* (1924) (Fig. 106), *Kajjali* (1927) and *Hanumāner Swapna* (1937). These remain the most inventive parodies of Bengali life, with their keen eye for the ridiculous in social behaviour. What Sukumar Ray did for children Bose did for adults. In the

104 *Society for the Prevention of Obscenity*, *Basantak*. Kālī, who in conventional iconography (see Fig. XII) is naked, is draped here in deference to the new morality

Bengali mind, Sen's witty sketches became inextricably linked with Bose's text.[105]

Not only Sen but other cartoonists too loved to dwell on the affectations of the young – their exotic coiffure, outlandish sartorial fashions, and partiality to gold-rimmed pince-nèz and other spectacles *à la*

105 Abanindranath Tagore: *A Comic Character* (inspired by plays produced at the Tagore home)

mode. The cartoonists juxtaposed two types of Bengali youth: the rugged, salt-of-the-earth, masculine young man and the languid, *fin-de-siècle*, Oscar Wilde type. The second read poetry, spent his time on personal grooming, and fainted at the sight of any anti-aesthetic unpleasantness. The classic stories of these types are Rajsekhar Bose's 'Rātārāti' (Overnight) and 'Kachi Samsad' (The league of youth). The loss of manliness in the colonial era weighed heavily on the Bengali mind, just as it regarded the emancipated woman with unmitigated horror. Nowhere were the cartoonists more brilliant than in their portrayals of dominating, domineering women. This ambivalence of bhadralok society is first seen in the art of Kalighat, with its images of viragoes (wife or mistress?) trampling masochistic *babus*. Woman as a burden or a disruptive force was a refrain of cartoons – the old man as a slave to his young wife, the graduate hampered by an illiterate spouse with whom he cannot make intellectual conversation.[106]

The movement for improving Hindu women's condition gathered force in the nineteenth century. *Satī* was abolished, but there remained other disabilities, such as a low level of education and infant marriage. The

106 Jatin Sen: illustration to Rajsekhar Bose's *Gaddālikā*

first women in Bengal to be emancipated, and many of them were Brahmos, became the butt of the cartoonist's pen, such as in *Basantak*. One cartoon that shows a well-dressed woman inside a peep-show box, has this explanation: 'Come along and view at last a Hindu woman whose veil has been lifted'. Two sahibs gaze at her, one of them reaching inside his pocket for money. The implication is clear: a woman who can show her face to a stranger without shame can also sell her body.[107]

Women's emancipation was an obsession with Bengali cartoonists, who played on men's subliminal fears. Once women were educated, they would neglect hearth and husband for the glamour of the outside world. The nationalist, who supported women's education, expected her not to demand equal rights with men but to be an inspiring mother. A widespread anxiety informed a society where reforms had only scratched the surface, where child marriage and dowry were still part of everyday life. Rabindranath observed, 'one group of people deny that there is any need for women's education, because men suffer many disadvantages when women receive education. An educated wife is no longer devoted to her husband, she forgets her duties and spends her time reading and in similar activities'.[108] Early on in *Basantak* the consequences of marrying an educated woman are made chillingly clear. The wife relaxes in an armchair with a novel while the poor husband tries to light the coal oven in the kitchen. As smoke enters the room, the wife, engrossed in the book, says in irritation: 'Can't you close the kitchen door while lighting the fire?' (Fig. 107).[109]

Jatin Sen and Benoy Ghosh portrayed liberated woman in various guises, appealing to men's fear of emasculation. In 'Women's Revolt', a young lady is dressed in men's clothes. In another cartoon (1924), the wife is going for a spin with her gentleman friend (Fig. 108). Unlike the 'unemancipated' husband, she and her friend are fashionable. She wears dark glasses; he sports a monocle and drives a latest model convertible. She instructs her husband to give the baby a bottle. Since he is not endowed by nature to breastfeed, the husband laments, he has no choice but to give it a bottle. The prickliest area was employment: highly placed women as judges, police superintendents and office executives would encroach into the men's world with inpunity, symbolised by puny clerks working under powerful women bosses. The cigar-smoking lady represents the final collapse of man's domain (Fig. 109).[110]

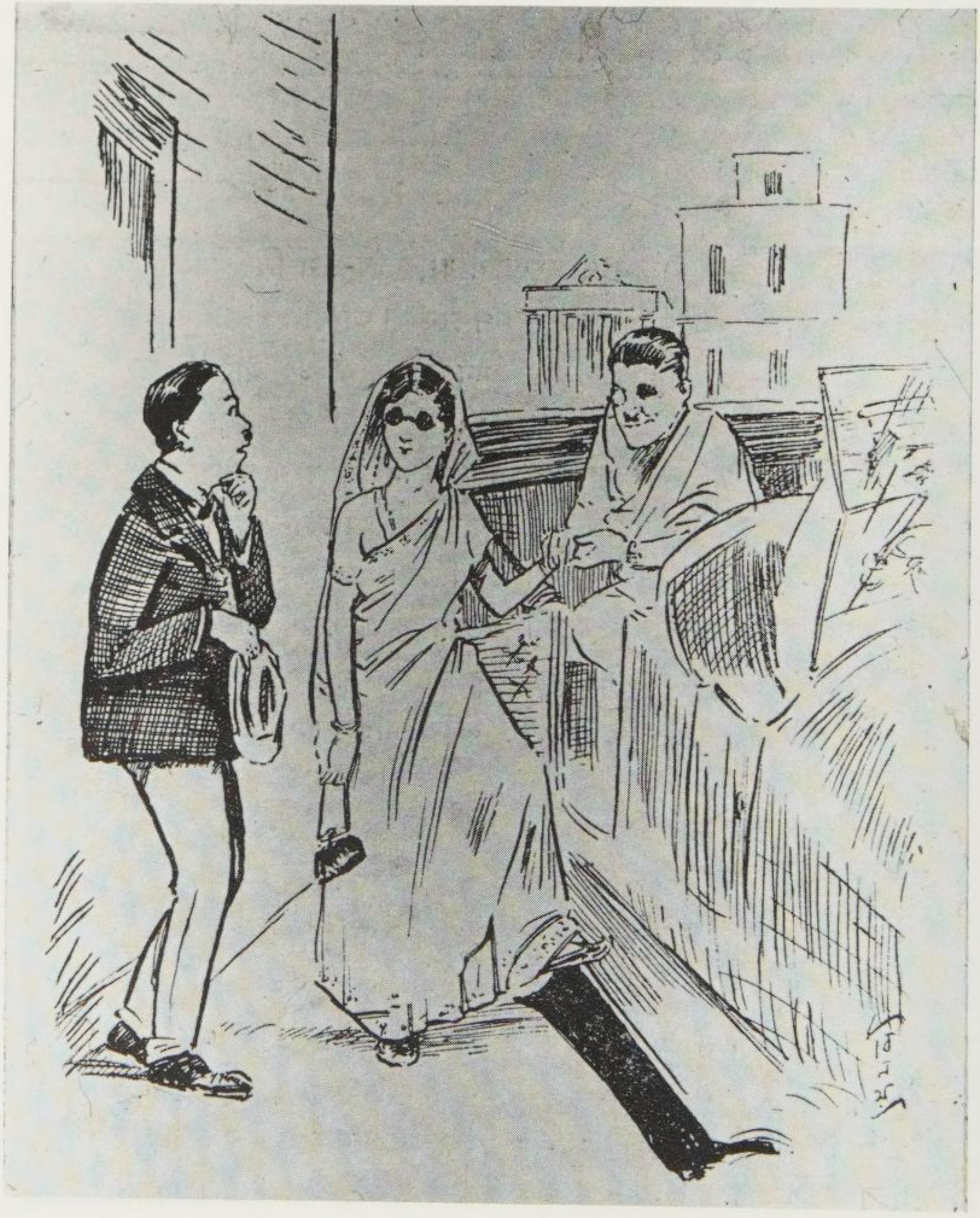
The erosion of social values under the impact of the West remained the favourite topic of Bengali caricature. In this no one matched the unsentimental eye of Gaganendranath Tagore. His brilliant sketches, lithographed by a Muslim artisan, appeared from 1917 onwards in three volumes, *Birup Bajra* (Play of Opposites), *Adbhut Lok* (Realm of the Absurd) and *Naba Hullod* (Reform screams). As Nirad Chaudhuri argues, 'the only expression in art ever given to Hindu liberalism, [was] . . . a set of lithographs after drawings by Gaganendranath Tagore . . . The cartoons

would not suffer by comparison with those of Daumier'.[111] Gaganendranath produced some sharply observed political cartoons, but by far his most original ones were social satires. If he continued with the economy of Kalighat, his ferocity also bore an uncanny resemblance to German Expressionism, the cartoonists of *Simplicissimus*, Bruno Paul and Rudolf Wilke (Figs XI; 110, 111, 112). The German comic paper was founded in 1896 with a distinct style – strong line, grotesque figures and faces, and flat areas of grey or beige. It is likely that the combination of bold lines and large flat surfaces in the *Simplicissimus* and in Gaganendranath ultimately went back to Japanese prints. The Bengali artist's admiration for Japanese art is known from other contexts.[112]

The brunt of Gagan's satire was borne by the westernised, whom he mocked for trying to be more English than the English. His cartoons with their bloated figures have a savage intensity, dwelling on what he saw as the hypocrisy, cant and double standards in Bengali society: the Brahmin paying lip service to the Vedas whilst taking graft for keeping whores (Fig. XI); Bengalis masquerading as black sahibs; the suffering wife

107 *Wife: Can't you close the door while lighting the fire?, Basantak*

waiting for the *babu* who visits the *demi-monde* (Fig. 112). Gaganendranath's lithographs were the culmination of the tradition of self-parody in Bengal. They pleased the English press no end. *The Englishman* wrote gleefully on the 'merciless satire not altogether undeserved, on some of the modern tendencies of the artist's countrymen'.[113] What they failed to appreciate was that with these cartoons the artist was engaging in a long-standing game, a game that continued the unresolved internal debate among Bengalis on cultural identity. Gaganendranath stood last in the line of such critics of the bhadralok society.



108 Benoy Ghosh: *Consequences of Folly*, *Mānasi o Marmabāni*, 1331 (1924)

SALON ARTISTS, MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION AND PEOPLE'S ART

The main thrust of the previous chapters has been to show the rise of colonial artists and patrons, widely seen as a triumphant vindication of Raj education policy. So what about the ordinary people who had hitherto been served by traditional artisans? At first glance they appear to

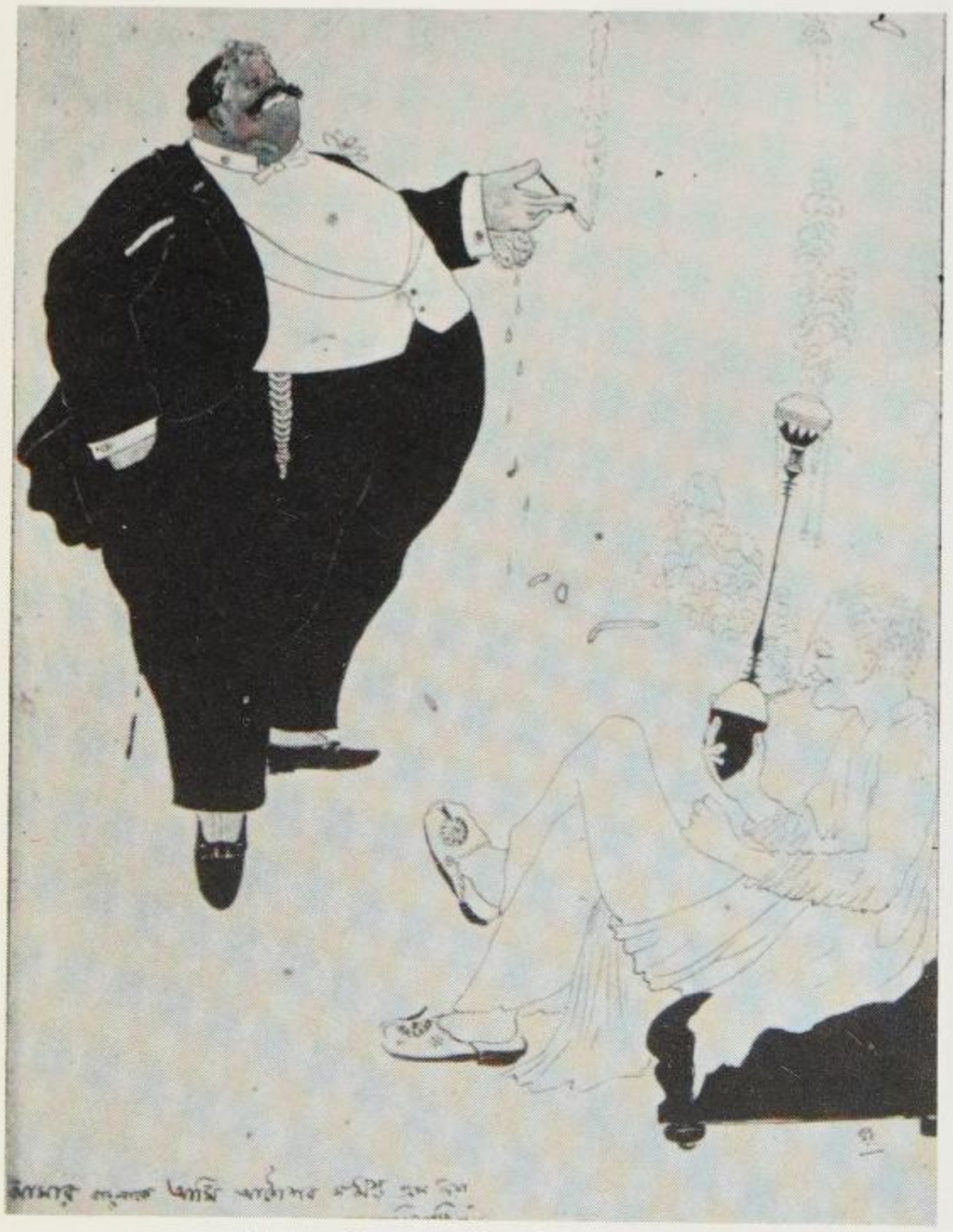
109 Jatin Sen: *A Cigar-Smoking Lady*, *Mānasi o Marmabāni*, 1326 (1919)

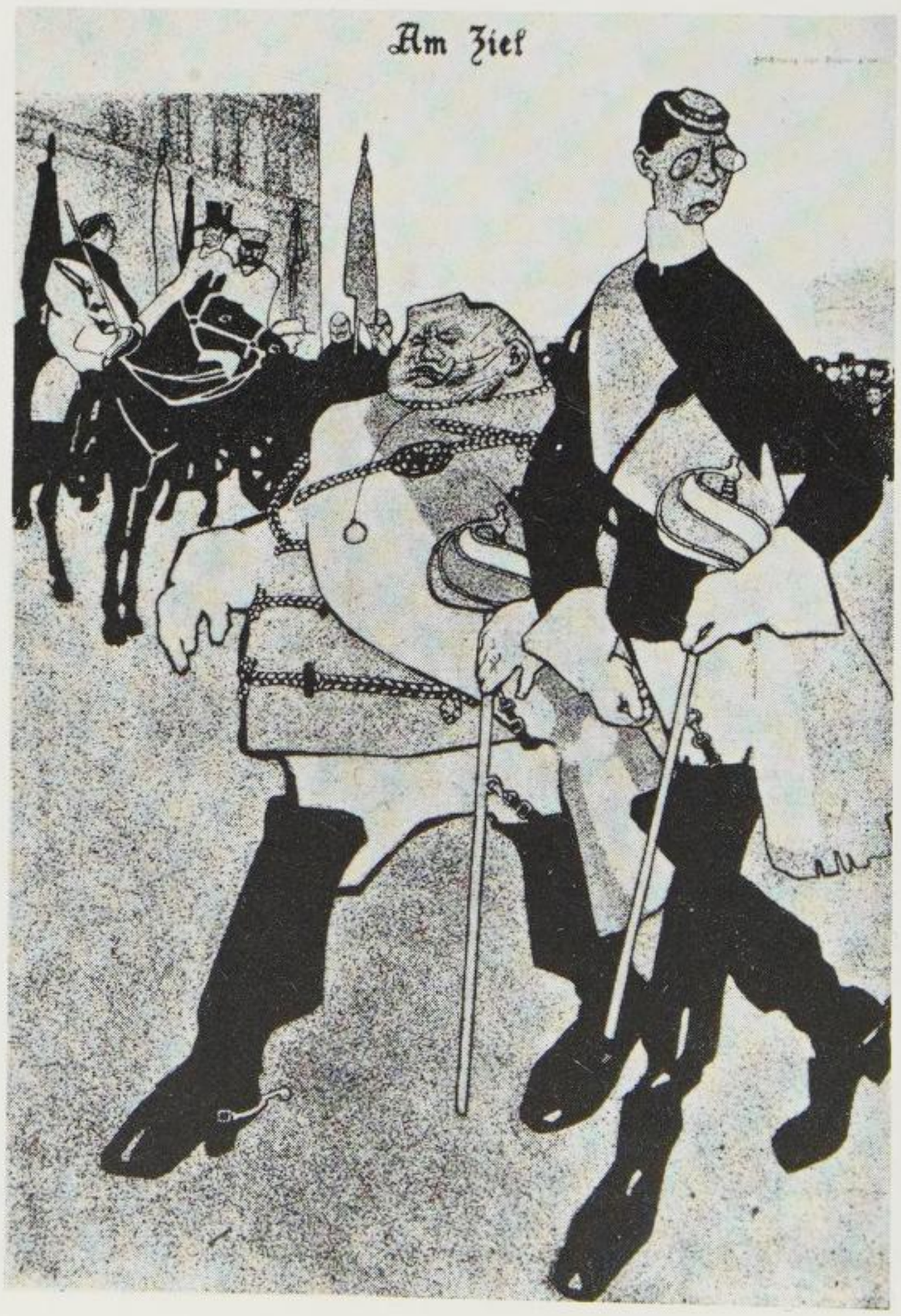
have been left out of the equation, as elite and popular art took different paths. Yet, in a curious twist of historical circumstance, the divide between the two was bridged by the elite artists when they took over printmaking from artisans. These mass prints had a profound impact on society, an art form that became universally accessible regardless of wealth and class.[114]

While cheap prints circulated in India from the last century, late in the century technically advanced German prints began flooding the Indian market. Some of the earliest ones were produced by south German firms specialising in Roman Catholic subjects. If one type of German oleograph provided for the devout in India, another catered for the prurient. Nor were local presses slow to learn. Lithographic presses mushroomed in Maharastra, with prints ranging from crude engravings to polychrome compositions. The lion's share was exacted by the Poona Chitrasala Press from 1888, if not as early as 1885 (Fig. 113); the steam press pioneered oleographs in India.[115]

If originally Bat-tala ('the Grub Street' of Calcutta) had made a large dent in the Kalighat monopoly of religious pictures in Bengal, art school

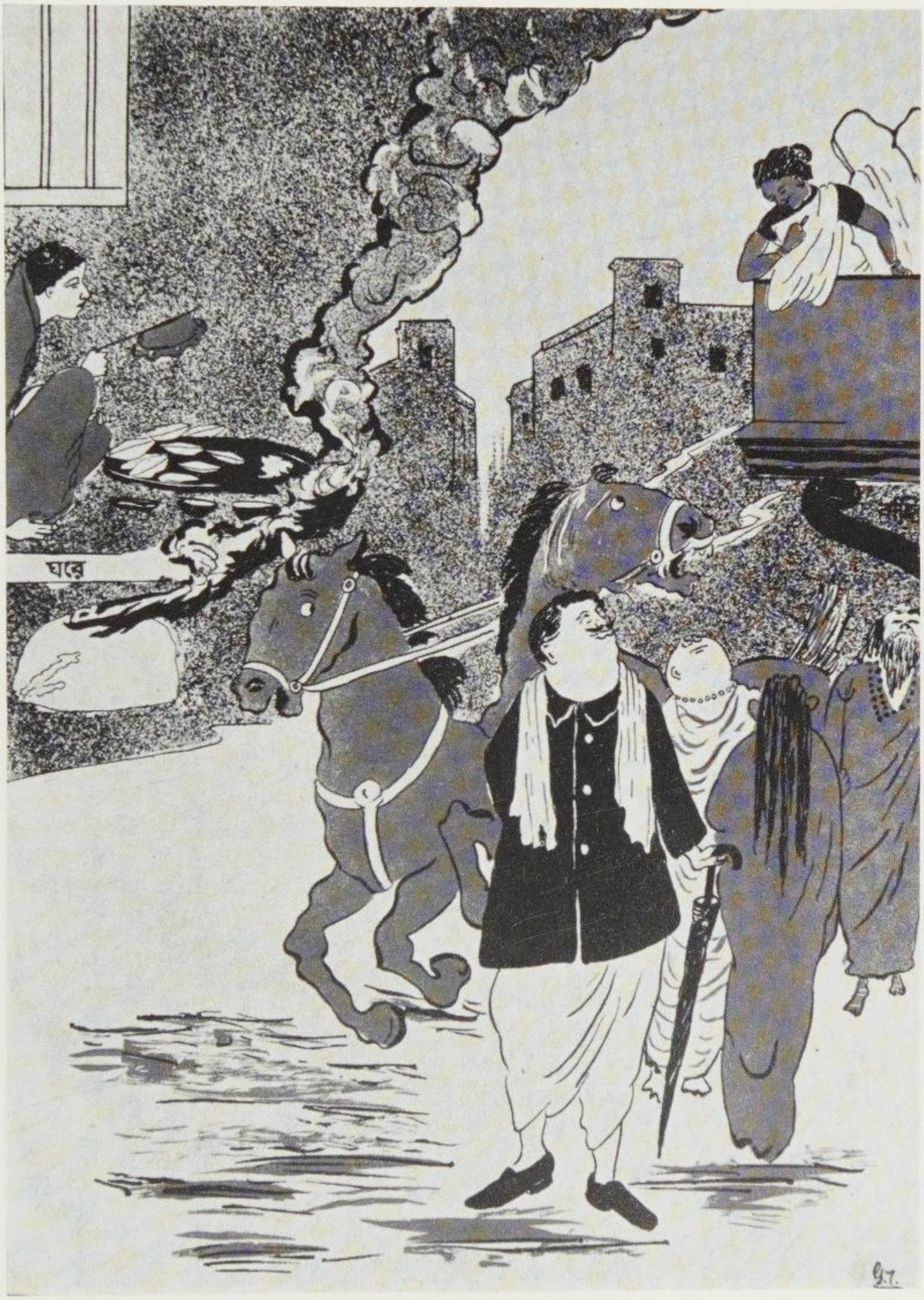
110 Gaganendranath Tagore: *A Modern Patriot*, hand-coloured lithograph. A caricature of westernised babus. The style with its use of lines and large flat areas is slightly reminiscent of Beerbohm's cartoons but its savagery is that of Bruno Paul in the *Simplicissimus*, Fig. 111





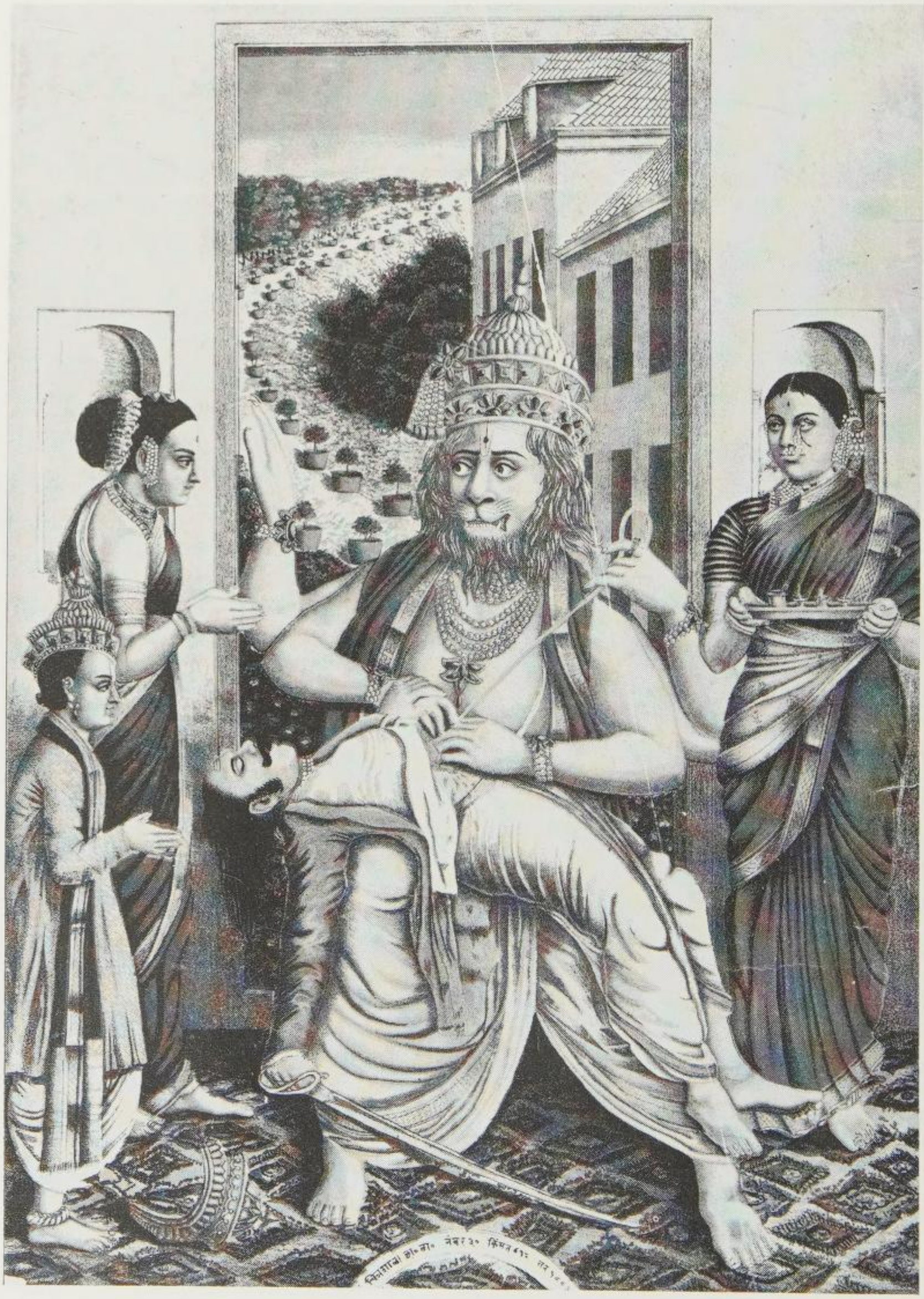
111 *Right* Bruno Paul: cartoon from the *Simplicissimus*

graduates soon secured a virtual monopoly in them. An official report of 1888 states that 'cheaper coloured [lithographs] of Gods and Goddesses turned out by the ex-students of the Calcutta School of Art' spelt the end of Kalighat.[116] The early rivals of Kalighat included Nrityalal Datta and Charuchandra Roy, who specialised in metal-plate prints, and Kristo Hurry Doss, the illustrator to J. M. Tagore's lavish volume, *Six Principal Ragas*. But the Calcutta Art Studio overshadowed the rest in popularity.



112 Gaganendranath Tagore: *A Wayside Distraction*, hand-coloured lithograph. While his faithful wife waits at home, the babu is distracted by other women (a play on the Sanskrit sloka: Pathi Nārī Vivarjitā or strange women encountered on the way should be avoided for obvious reasons)

The multi-purpose Studio, set up around 1878, was Annada Bagchi's most successful financial venture. Since the nineteenth century, claimed his biographer, it had supplied pictures for decorating Bengali homes.[117] The success of the Studio owed to two of the partners, Nabakumar Biswas and Annada Bagchi, whose designs were superior to those of previous engravers. The publicity received at the exhibition of 1883 boosted their confidence. Locke reported that they could '"hold their



113 Poona Chitrashala Press: *Narasinha*, lithograph of a Hindu deity in a conventional pose

own in their own lines against all comers" and the architectural lithographs of the last mentioned student [were] excellent'.[118] The studio thrived between 1878–1920 mainly as a lithographic press and continues today as a printing concern (Figs XII, 127, 128). The popularity of its religious chromo-lithographs encouraged European entrepreneurs to enter the market. The Studio made Bamapada Bandopadhaya aware of the market in popular prints. His works printed in Austria and Germany sold in Calcutta (Fig. 114).[119]

114 Bamapada Bandopadhaya: *Śakuntalā*, lithograph (printed in Germany)

Bagchi soon left the Studio, as his teaching commitments increased and a clash of interests between the partners surfaced. When the Studio was auctioned off in 1882, Nabakumar Biswas bought it up. During his regime the Studio not only undertook lithographs on a large scale, but added oil and photographic portraits to its repertory, once again blurring the distinction between elite and popular art. A convenient outlet for the prints was the shop owned by Nabakumar's brother Prasanna in the Tiretta Bazaar. The hand-tinted lithographs, which fetched a rupee or two, managed to hold their own against competition until they were superseded by Ravi Varma's oleographs in the 1890s.[120]

The Studio iconography was traditional but the Classical postures of Hindu deities, especially goddesses, who sported disconcertingly muscular limbs, were inspired by the art school casts of Apollo, Artemis and Aphrodite, and above all by Renaissance paintings. The Studio swiftly won the hearts of urban Bengal, but failed to please discerning critics. Balendranath Tagore, for instance, preferred Ravi Varma to what was increasingly seen as the garish colour schema of the Studio.[121] The Studio sold prints on the Bengali theatre and brought out monochrome portraits of eminent Bengalis, popular among the bhadralok. It printed political topics, such as the intriguing lithograph, *Begging India back from Britain*. But its most striking political icon was originally religious. *Kālī* (1879) (Fig. XII) was later used to market a 'nationalist brand of cigarettes'; the print of the dread goddess wreaking vengeance was scoured for a hidden political message by the government. The print was adapted by Maharastran revolutionaries as a nationalist icon. *Kālī* was widely plagiarised. The Bhau Bul Company of London released another version printed in Germany; *Kālī* provided the 'logo' for safety matches.[122]

The last three chapters dealt with the different facets of westernisation that helped create the taste for naturalism in colonial India. They centred on the high point of academic art, between the closing decade of the last and the early years of this century. This was when the ground rules of academic naturalism were set and patterns of patronage established. In this selective overview, many artists' lives remain unsung. But that does not mean that they did not share the new values and ambitions. The main feature of this period was the rise of the self-conscious artist, whose high social standing and professional kudos were linked to modern networks, institutions and means of communication. And yet, even though the gentleman artist mainly catered to the elite, his concern with mechanical reproduction forced him to enter the competition for the hearts of the people. The colonial artist who was brilliantly successful in both elite and popular spheres was Ravi Varma. I have gone beyond his period in order to set his achievements against the general phenomenon of colonial art. We now retrace our steps to examine this remarkable painter.

5 THE ARTIST AS CHARISMATIC INDIVIDUAL: RAJA RAVI VARMA

> I spent the entire morning looking at Ravi Varma's pictures. I must confess I find them really attractive. After all, these pictures prove to us how dear our own stories, our own images and expressions are to us. In some paintings, the figures are not quite in proportion. Never mind! The total effect is compelling.
>
> Rabindranath Tagore, *Chhinna Patrābali* 1893

The glittering career of Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906) is a striking case study of salon art in India – the 'artistic genius' who embodied the virtues expected of an academic artist. In the year following his death, *Modern Review* described him as the greatest artist of modern India, a nation builder, who showed the moral courage of a gifted 'high-born' in taking up the 'degrading profession of painting'.[1] It is curious in retrospect that the artist also hailed by the Raj as the finest in India, never crossed the threshold of an art school. Nor did he originate in an urban environment. Ravi Varma Koil Tampuran was born on 29 April 1848 into an aristocratic family in the remote province of Kerala. The Varmas of Killimanoor were allied by marriage with the rulers of Travancore.

Today it is hard to imagine the reputation enjoyed by Varma during his lifetime. The death of 'the famous Indian artist' was announced on 25 December 1906 in *The Times* of London.[2] He was courted as assiduously by the Raj as by the Indian maharajas, whilst cheap prints of his Hindu deities hung in every home. These prints, which are still an essential ingredient of popular culture, are derided by modern critics as bad art. To the untutored Indian, however, they have lost none of their charm. Ravi Varma's spectacular canvases influenced the pioneers of the Indian cinema, Dadasaheb Phalke and Baburao Painter, much as Victorian art inspired the Hollywood director D. W. Griffith. The opulent beauties of Indian cinema and calendars can lay a claim to their descent from Varma's heroines.[3]

To be sure, the high compliments paid by the English rulers were often demanded by social etiquette. Yet official approval in some cases went

beyond the demands of *politesse*, or even *noblesse oblige*. Lord Curzon, the 'most superior' Viceroy, put the official seal of approval on Ravi Varma's works as a 'happy blend of Western technique and Indian subject and free from Oriental stiffness'.[4] He recognised Varma as 'one who for the first time in the art history of India, commenced a new style of painting'.[5] Curzon of course favoured the Indian nobility. The Prince of Wales on his visit to India in 1875–6 expressed 'great pleasure in [Varma's] works, [and] was presented with two of them by the Maharaja of Travancore'.[6] The Duke of Buckingham, sometime Governor of Madras, enthusiastically acquired Varma's painting based on Kalidasa's *Śakuntalā*. A later Governor, Lord Ampthill, wrote to Varma's son on his death: 'when I think that I would not see Ravi Varma in this world any more my heart is filled with sorrow'.[7] There was a further bond here. Ampthill, who was painted in masonic regalia by Varma, expressed his pleasure that the artist's son was part of the brotherhood. The Portuguese plenipotentiary at Goa was equally warm in praise of his own portrait: 'it did not belie the good reputation that you have earned in the Salon of Bombay . . . [for] the correctness of the design and the exactness of the touches'.[8]

Among all early academic artists, only Varma stood out as 'a legend in his own time'. Rabindranath spoke for the western-educated generation when he stated: 'In my childhood, when Ravi Varma's age arrived in Bengal, reproductions of European paintings on the walls were promptly replaced with oleographs of his works'.[9] The age to which Varma belonged, and which he mirrored so faithfully in his work, is gone, and memory is dulled by the miasma of adulation and prejudice surrounding his reputation. One has to go back to history to grasp the revolutionary implications of his achievements. To nineteenth-century Indians Ravi Varma's history paintings epitomised the magic that was naturalism.

THE MAKING OF THE PRINCELY ARTIST

The man and his myths

Perhaps nothing brings home more vividly the exalted image of Varma than the corpus of myths which reinforced his charismatic appeal, creating the *topos* of the artist as genius. As he dealt with *Purāṇic* heroes, so his contemporaries saw him through the mists of legend, the hero who triumphed over obstacles. The anecdotes about his life remind us of similar legends about artists in other cultures. They are a universal human response to the mysterious powers of the artist as image-maker. These stories get recorded only when the name of the artist can be attached to a work of art, as in Varma's case. The reputation of the artist in this case depends not only on his works but also on the significance attached to artists in that society.[10]

A few of the legends about Varma are selected here to bring out colonial India's perception of its most successful artist. They possess a mythical quality, not in the sense of fiction, but as powerful tales that legitimise the artist as a hero and a magician. The earliest one is of Varma's pregnant mother being possessed by a spirit that prophesied the future child's greatness. This archaic motif of the divine birth of artists is common in the West, but the form it takes here is bound up with Indian lores about the birth of superhuman beings.[11] The common belief in the genius expressing his gifts in childhood and being 'discovered' was also applied to young Ravi. Contemplative by nature, he spent days watching the effects of light and shadow in nature. He drew on walls and sketched incessantly when he should have been memorising his Sanskrit conjugations. The prodigy was then duly 'discovered' by his uncle Raja Raja Varma, an artist himself. The child often watched him at work. Once in his uncle's absence, he even dared to complete the figure of a bird in his uncle's painting. The older man was so impressed with the work that he predicted his future greatness. The closest western parallel is Giotto, who drew on sand and stone, but there is no evidence that this legend was known to Varma's biographers.[12] It is likely that the child showed an early precocity; some children do, but they do not all become artists, while some artists are late developers. Ravi's younger brother was a more skilled landscape painter than he. Yet Ravi alone was credited with a rare sensitivity to nature. It is common for artists' biographers to single out elements from childhood to explain later success: the genius must have been a *Wunderkind*.

But above all it was the image of the romantic hero, pitted against hostile forces, that captured Indian imagination. Triumph over obstacles has figured in stories of 'self-taught' artists in the West since antiquity. The legend of the 'self-taught' Varma has a similarly universal ring to it. 'He had none to guide and instruct him in the technique and mysteries of oil painting . . . yet nothing daunted [him] . . . he worked till he overcame all difficulties', as one biographer put it.[13] His career thus became an object lesson in the triumph of will and inherent talent that did not depend on traditional training. This story can be traced back to a small pamphlet, *Ravi Varma, The Hindu Artist of India*, issued in connection with the Chicago exhibition of 1893: 'Ravi Varma started painting for amusement, not expecting this to be his life's work. He had no one to instruct him or draw inspiration from when he started'.[14] An oft-quoted story in this connection is the English artist Theodore Jensen's visit to the Travancore court in 1868 and his refusal to help him.[15]

The obstacles for the artistic genius to overcome include the ritual defeat of rivals, another favourite *topos* in artistic biographies. The court painter of Travancore, Ramaswamy Naidu, sensing Ravi as a possible rival, refused to help him. But if we are to credit the same tradition, Naidu's pupil helped Varma secretly, as acknowledged by the artist. Yet it

was Naidu's refusal that became a spur to his excellence. He remained Varma's celebrated 'rival' in the biographies, seeking to outpaint him at the Madras exhibition of 1873, where young Ravi made his début. A puzzling tradition grew up in this context. Later sources state that Varma's paintings won a prize at the Vienna exhibition of 1873. And yet, none of the catalogues mentions him at all. On the other hand, they mention Naidu's participation in Vienna, though he is never mentioned by Varma's biographers. One strong reason for Varma's absence in Vienna in 1873 was that the unknown young man had just exhibited for the first time in Madras that year. The official selection for Vienna had taken place a year before. The inconsistency in the different accounts strongly suggests artistic rivalry, which is further confirmed by the fact that the story originated at a later stage of the artist's career. Ravi had another rival, the painter Kundan Lal of Rajasthan. Lal's biographer indeed claims that the Rajasthani painter outclassed Ravi Varma. In this case, the version from Varma's side is more reliable. His brother, who was not given to exaggeration, wrote in his private diary: 'Kundal Lal is awfully jealous of us and spoke disparagingly of our work . . . my nephew who heard him, challenged him to try his skill with ours. He was at once humbled and departed crestfallen'.[16] Kundan Lal's work does not bear comparison with that of Ravi Varma.

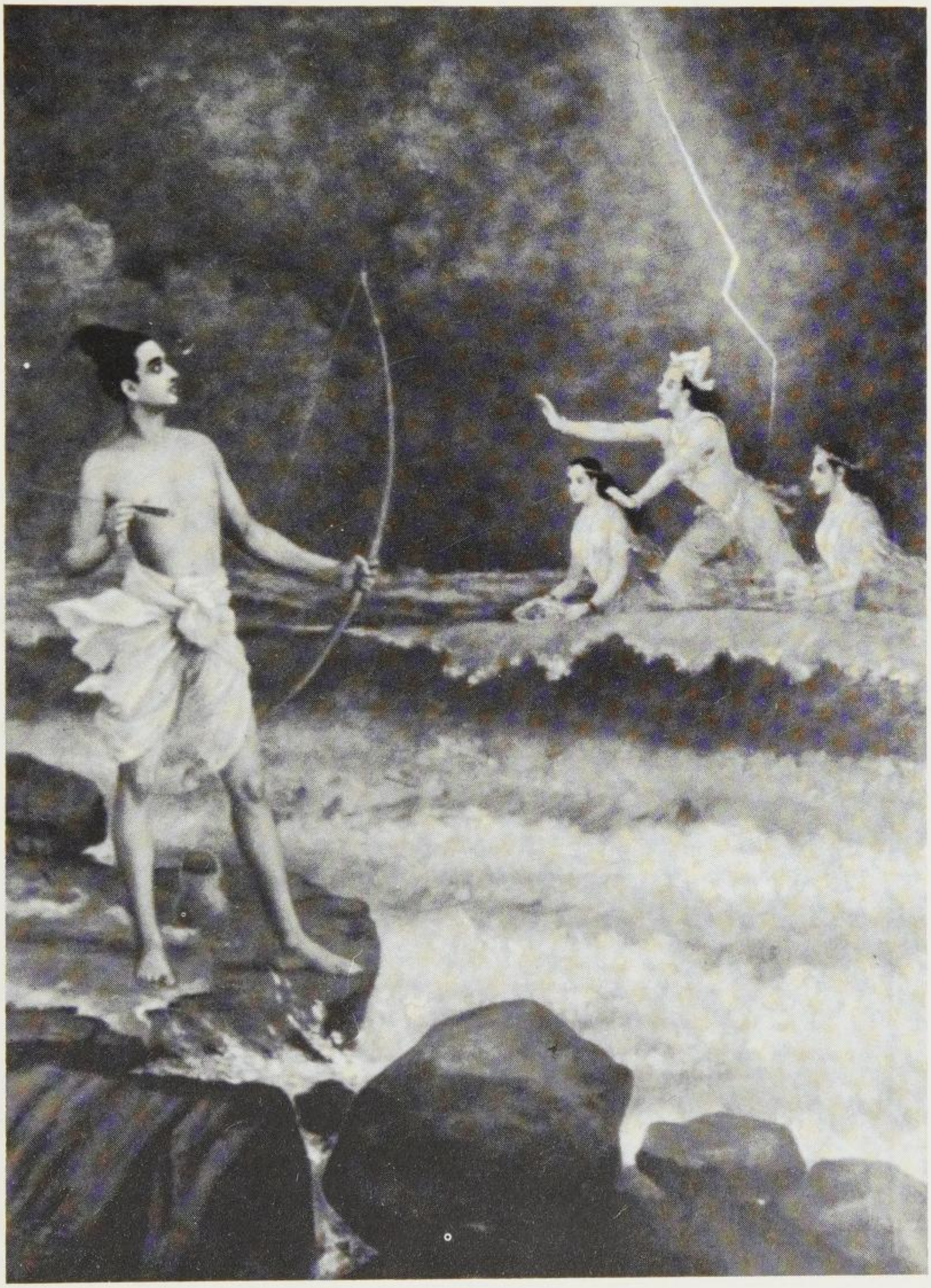
Varma's mastery of western illusionism created his legendary reputation. The following two myths were meant to confirm him as an illusionist, a magician. The first is that, in order to depict a subject faithfully, the artist has to re-create the scene in real life. Once when Varma used a beautiful young princess to model as Rādhā, he was unable to make the girl assume a lovelorn expression, until the moment she fell in love with the artist. The story is not unlike the anecdote about the German artist, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt. He is said to have crucified his model in order to depict real agony. A related myth highlights the element of chance in the creation of a masterpiece. It is said that when Varma was grappling with the problem of capturing the effect of lightning in *Rāma Humbling the Seas* (Fig. 115), real lightning flashed across the sky which gave him the requisite inspiration.[17]

The final myth celebrates the artist's ability to produce a deceptive imitation of real objects. As Ravi Varma's descendant Indira Varma writes, when a European woman painter tried to deceive him with a *trompe-l'oeil* umbrella, the artist

> invited the lady . . . to dinner. When she arrived, he led her inside. She found many other guests seated on either side of a long table in a large hall. The artist asked her to take her place. But when she tried to do so, she found that the door, the large room, the table and the guests, all formed part of one large canvas.[18]

The evolution of Ravi Varma's art

What was the basis for Ravi Varma's legendary reputation? His personal charm was attested by many including Ampthill and the Congress leader, Gokhale. In hierarchical Indian society, Varma's social eminence supplied an added aura to this 'prince among painters and a painter among princes', as a critic called him.[19] It is significant that his earliest biographer described him as the first 'gentleman artist'.[20] Born in 1848, Varma was a transitional



115 Ravi Varma: *Rāma Humbling the Seas*, oil

figure who reconciled in his person the differences between salon artists and the earlier oil painters. Like the earlier generation, Varma had no art school training. And yet, he was anything but traditional. Varma created in India the image of the fashionable painter, the travelling professional who fulfilled commissions by constantly being on the move, breaking in the process the monopoly of the European painters. Even though he had shown the way, no other Indian artist ever matched his pan-Indian network.

The legend of the self-taught genius was at the heart of his reputation. Yet Varma's importance rests not so much on being outside tradition as on his mastery of Tanjore court art and then transcending it in his unique style. Contrary to the myth of Ravi Varma's artistic isolation, the Varmas had a long history as amateur painters, even though they were of the warrior caste. His uncle and mentor, Raja Raja Varma, his younger brother, C. Raja Raja Varma, and his sister, Mangalabai Tampuratti, were all serious artists. Being a woman, Mangalabai was not allowed the latitude enjoyed by the two brothers but her portrait of Ravi Varma now in Trivandrum is ample proof of her skill. The family tradition continues.[21]

What were the essential ingredients in Varma's artistic education? His uncle Raja Raja, an amateur in ivory painting, had learnt his craft from the Tanjore painters at the court, possibly from Alagiri Naidu. He conducted informal art classes for the children of the family, among whom was Ravi, the only one to complete the exercises set by his uncle.[22] Secondly, even though Ramaswami Naidu refused to train Ravi, the court painter's canvases were on view in the palace (Figs XIII, XIV). He was a well-respected 'traditional' oil painter. Naturalism had crept into other parts of traditional Kerala, as for instance in the murals of the Padmanabhanswami temple in Trivandrum. This mixed world of Varma's youth provided the groundwork of his art.[23]

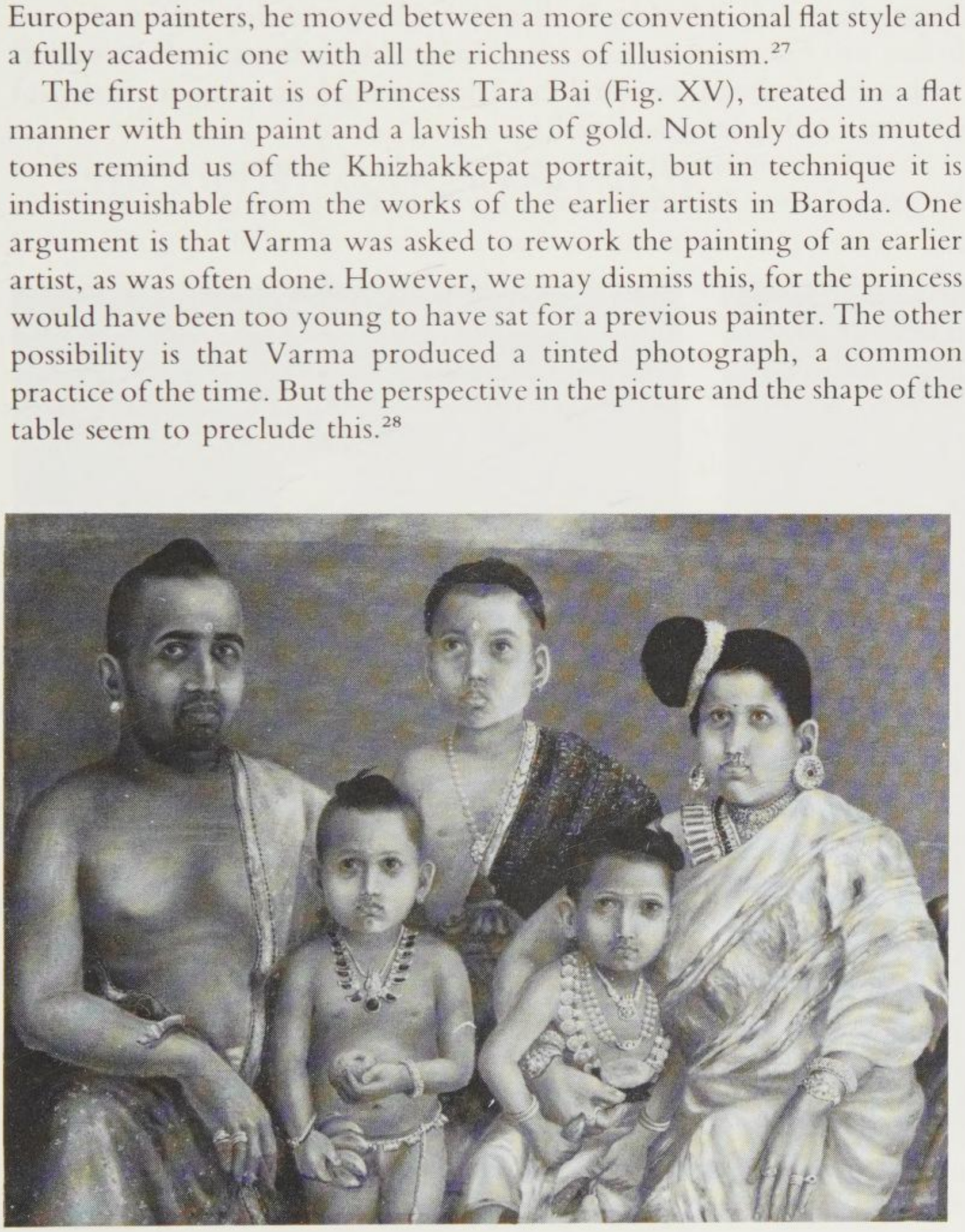
A more conscious influence on Varma was Theodore Jensen, who visited Travancore in 1868. The last of the dwindling band of artist-adventurers, Jensen was making the rounds of the princely courts, armed with an introduction from the Viceroy. Ravi was about twenty when he had this chance to observe the working methods of a western artist. One is not sure as to how much Ravi learned from him. One of his biographers, who prefers the self-taught image of the artist, contends that Jensen refused to reveal the 'secrets of colour mixing' to the Keralan. Admittedly, some European artists, including Reynolds, were secretive about their painting techniques.[24] But it is more likely that as a visitor, Jensen simply lacked the time to give lessons to the shy youth. On the other hand, he could not offend his patron, the Maharaja, and probably allowed his protégé to watch him at work, as suggested by contemporary accounts.[25]

Ravi profited from the experience. Compare, for instance, the very similar treatment of the garment in two paintings in particular: Varma's accession portrait of the Gaekwad of Baroda and Jensen's likeness of a Maratha chief. Not only the techniques of oil painting, but his working

methods (see p. 189) also show a familiarity with the precepts and practices of academic art, which was not possible without some form of instruction. A voracious learner, when the English painter Frank Brooks was hired for his younger brother, Ravi took an active interest in the lessons. The result was the lighter palette of his later works.[26]

These stages in his training still do not tell us how his art evolved. The 1870 portrait of the Khizhakkepat Palat Krishna Menon family (Fig. 116) is in the flat style of Varma's predecessors. Although the works at the Madras exhibition of 1873 show greater chiaroscuro, their sombre colours hark back to the past. It is only in Baroda in 1880–1 that we marvel at his evolution, where his earlier and later styles co-exist. The two key portraits completed within a few years suggest that, as in the case of late-medieval European painters, he moved between a more conventional flat style and a fully academic one with all the richness of illusionism.[27]

The first portrait is of Princess Tara Bai (Fig. XV), treated in a flat manner with thin paint and a lavish use of gold. Not only do its muted tones remind us of the Khizhakkepat portrait, but in technique it is indistinguishable from the works of the earlier artists in Baroda. One argument is that Varma was asked to rework the painting of an earlier artist, as was often done. However, we may dismiss this, for the princess would have been too young to have sat for a previous painter. The other possibility is that Varma produced a tinted photograph, a common practice of the time. But the perspective in the picture and the shape of the table seem to preclude this.[28]



116 Ravi Varma: *The Khizhakkepat Palat Family*, oil

If one compares it with Varma's second portrait of Tara Bai (Fig. 117) and that of Maharani Chimna Bai II (Fig. XVI), one is startled by the difference. They have a concern for character and pictorial depth and well capture the youthful shyness of the sitters. The rich colours are applied in an opaque 'western' manner. Great skill is displayed in details like pearl necklaces, satin and silk fabrics, gold brocade borders, lapdogs, background marble pillars and drapery. The artist took them as 'illusionist' challenges that had to be met. These 'later' Baroda portraits, including the accession portrait of Sayaji Rao III, give evidence of technical mastery. While one admires his virtuosity, one is also baffled as to how Varma gained such confidence in so short a time. This technical assurance culminated in possibly the finest of his likenesses, *The Portrait of A Lady* (1893) (Fig. 118), a noble work which blends the disparate worlds of Indian and European art – an ivory Ingres-like treatment of the subject with a deep feeling for naturalism. The painting is arresting in its elegant economy and quiet grandeur.[29]

So if by professional training an art school training is meant, then Varma had none. But that is not to say he had no training at all. Far from

117 Ravi Varma: *Princess Tara Bai*, oil

118 *Right* Ravi Varma: *Portrait of a Lady*, oil

being an amateur, Varma owed his professional success to a systematic training first in traditional art, followed by European art. Though he was relatively self-taught in the last sphere, he did receive a certain amount of informal instruction. One hitherto unnoticed element is the role of printed reproductions in his art, a colonial phenomenon the significance of which cannot be gainsaid. Varma devised his complex narratives by a close study of Royal Academy paintings published in the *Magazine of Art*, a journal religiously bought by him. He also obtained German art books from a German artist at his lithographic press.[30] Only in their later career did the brothers study European paintings in the original. As Raja Varma informs us in 1895, he could 'spend hours admiring architecture, paintings, statues and furniture' at the Laxmi Vilas Palace in Baroda. This was when Ravi Varma copied *Judith* by the French Orientalist painter J. J. Benjamin-Constant.[31]

THE ARTIST AS ENTREPRENEUR

Ravi Varma's lifestyle was as novel as his style of painting: his professionalism was new in India, the artist as entrepreneur. Though he carved a niche for himself in portraiture, the most competitive genre in this period, he may not even have considered painting as a career. Given the low status of pre-colonial artists, the landed aristocracy would never paint for their livelihood. Court artists, such as Alagiri Naidu, were treated as craftsmen. Even lower on the social scale were the temple decorators in Kerala. For the boys of the noble Varma family, the normal 'vocation' was to marry into the Travancore ruling house. Ravi's failure to be chosen, because he was considered too dark, was a blessing. Despite grumbles from his family, he felt free to follow his own calling.[32]

What helped Varma's ambitions was the fact that even tradition-bound Travancore was changing. Ailam Tirunal, the innovative ruler of Travancore, brought western ideas and institutions to his kingdom with the assistance of his Dewan, the brilliant Tanjore Madhava Rao. Both of them encouraged Ravi, whose formative years were spent in their company. The European art in the Maharaja's palace was eagerly examined by the youth. The 'Mannerist' ideal of his heroines may date from that period.[33] The Khizhakkepat Palat portrait commission of 1870 launched the young artist into an artistic career. Three years later he came to the notice of R. Chisholm of the Madras art school, who urged the Maharaja of Travancore to enter Ravi's pictures for the Madras Fine Arts Exhibition. On receiving the Governor's gold medal for his *Nair Lady at [Her] Toilet*, Varma was granted an interview with the Governor. The work was later presented by Travancore to the visiting monarch, Edward VII. The success in Madras was followed by prizes in art exhibitions around India, as well as portrait commissions. Varma was on the way to becoming a society portraitist.[34]

Two gentlemen painters

A valuable source for Ravi Varma's life as a professional artist is the diary of his younger brother, C. Raja Raja Varma. The earliest known diary by an Indian artist, Raja kept it from c. 1895 until his death in 1905, carefully documenting their lives together. Since first-hand information on Ravi Varma is scarce before this period, and disappointingly little is known about his two major projects, the Baroda portraits (1881) and the *Puranic* cycle (1890), the diary helps us to reconstruct his career. We get tantalising glimpses of his artistic practices from the diary even though it covers only the later period. In addition, Raja's low-key reporting style remains a more reliable guide than the uncritical encomia of Ravi Varma's followers.[35]

Raja joined Ravi in the 1880s, when portrait commissions were organised with businesslike efficiency. Ravi's junior by a dozen years, Raja became his companion, collaborator and amanuensis during their most productive years. Despite their considerable difference in years, the fraternal team built up a formidable practice. They complemented each other: the older one, expansive and sociable, the younger, taciturn and reserved; the first preferred complex figure compositions, while the second concentrated on landscapes. The diary forces us to revise the prevailing image of Ravi Varma's lonely eminence, and see him within the framework of a collaborative enterprise. Not that this detracts from his achievements but it helps us to put his career in perspective. The brothers' closeness is further evidence of the younger man's importance to the master's work. Their constant travels made them strangers to their family. Their wives remain shadowy figures. We only hear of Ravi Varma's wife when, at her death, he was obliged to observe a month's ritual mourning. The fraternal artists' perennial travels may have been a source of friction between Ravi and his wife. Raja regretted on his death-bed the fact that he had neglected his wife. Lest we judge the brothers harshly, in matrilineal Kerala, the wife remains closer to her own family than to her husband, continuing to reside at her family home after marriage.[36]

Raja Varma's *A Tour in Upper India* is more formal than the diary. In it the fluency of a young man with an English liberal education tries to break out of its rather florid style. Raja modelled himself on earlier English diarists, possibly on Emily Eden, but he lacked her mordant wit. On occasions however he could speak his mind, as on the art teacher, Griffiths:

> On a big easel was his *chef d'oeuvre*, *The Temple Steps*, in a beautifully carved blackwood frame, a painting on which he had bestowed much labour and time . . . It was poor in colour, poor in execution, and poor in design. We have seen a similar subject handled in a more masterly way by Mr. Van Ruith . . . [37]

Together, the candid diary and the formal *Tour* afford us a vivid picture of patrons, friends and fellow-artists of the Varmas.

Ravi and Raja Varma's work methods

The diary enables us to make inferences about the brothers' painting methods that were so different from traditional practices. Had they kept to the latter, they would have filled in the painting surface with colour, once the basic design chosen from a formulary of stencils had been outlined. Instead, they practised a strictly representational method, centred on the initial rough sketch, followed by its progressive improvement based on observation of the particular. The use of 'schema and correction' which underlies the successful likeness of a portrait, is described by E. H. Gombrich as follows:

> the many sketches which precede the finished work, and for all the skill of . . . the master, a constant readiness to learn, to make and match and remake till the portrayal . . . reflects the unique and unrepeatable experience which the artist wishes to seize and hold.[38]

This tentative approach, an easily recognised feature of academic art, holds that a painting always has room for improvement. Passages in the diary of Raja, the first Indian landscape painter, acknowledge this, as for instance: 'The trees in my picture were quite spoilt and I [am not sure?] of being able to mend it. It looks hard and wanting an atmosphere'. Two days after, he succeeded in improving the work, though 'the trees in the middle distance [were] found [to be] most difficult to manage'. In the 1890s, the German artist employed by the Varmas offered verbal suggestions and assistance in painting. The problem-solving outlook is evident in an Udaipur landscape (Fig. XVII), where Raja 'changed the water in [his] sketch to a calm surface with reflections of buildings in it. It [was] certainly an improvement, as water in motion [was] most difficult to paint'.[39]

A member of the Sketching Club of Madras, Raja often sent his landscapes for comments to other members. On 7 May 1901, Raja received a bunch of sketches of members of the club, with criticisms by an English professional artist, who wrote on one of his interiors:

> This work conveys capitally a pleasant feeling of shade and cool reflected by light, and of quietude, the drawing of man writing is very good and pose easy and natural and in harmony with the general sentiment of the picture. The colour is pleasant and the touches of light on various objects well drawn and considered and crisply put on and in good keeping of tone and colour.[40]

In their portraits too, the brothers kept retouching until they felt satisfied with the likeness, yet again a normal European practice. Until much later,

the senior partner alone was entrusted with the face. The portraits confirm Ravi Varma's unusual gift of capturing likenesses. In the course of their career they received commissions from the leading princely states, and English and Indian dignitaries. The Duke of Buckingham is said to have remarked that he had once given eighteen sittings to a European painter, who was unable to do half as well as Ravi Varma with so few sittings. A portrait of King Edward VII, based on a photograph, was executed for the government. This was a common practice, since portraits of the British monarch were often required for ceremonial purposes. But many of the finest portraits by the Varmas were produced for Baroda.[41]

Part of the brothers' professional success owed to the network of friends and agents throughout India, as indicated for instance by the diary entry of 31 January 1901: 'Visited Sir Balachandra and spoke to him about securing us the orders for Ranade's portrait for the Elphinstone College. He has kindly promised to use his influence'. At Udaipur the brothers' intermediary was Fatehlal Mehta, a confidant of the Maharana, 'with whom we had a long correspondence on the subject of our visit to this state'. In Mysore they appointed an agent to look after their interests. There is evidence that their reputation was not created overnight, but through patience, enterprise and punctual fulfilling of contracts.[42]

For the historian the fees charged by the Varmas are of considerable interest. Unfortunately, we are in the dark about their early period, but later they commanded higher prices than an average Indian painter. For instance, in 1899, their fee was Rs 1,500 for a full-length portrait, Rs 700 for a half-length one, and Rs 300 for a bust. By contrast, the highest charge for a life-size portrait by a Bengali painter was Rs 300. But how did the Varmas compare with their main rivals, the visiting Europeans? By the middle of the nineteenth century, the latter's numbers had dropped sharply. The state guest, Valentine Prinsep, who did the rounds of the princely courts in 1877, does not mention his charges. However we have the fees of earlier painters; Zoffany (in India: 1783–9), for instance, charged Rs 700 for a three-quarter portrait. Allowing for a rise in the cost of living and a fall in the exchange rate of rupees to the pound in the Varmas' period, Rs 1,500 for a full-length portrait was roughly comparable in real terms. But these were modest fees compared with those charged by Varma's British contemporaries, such as Edwin Long.[43]

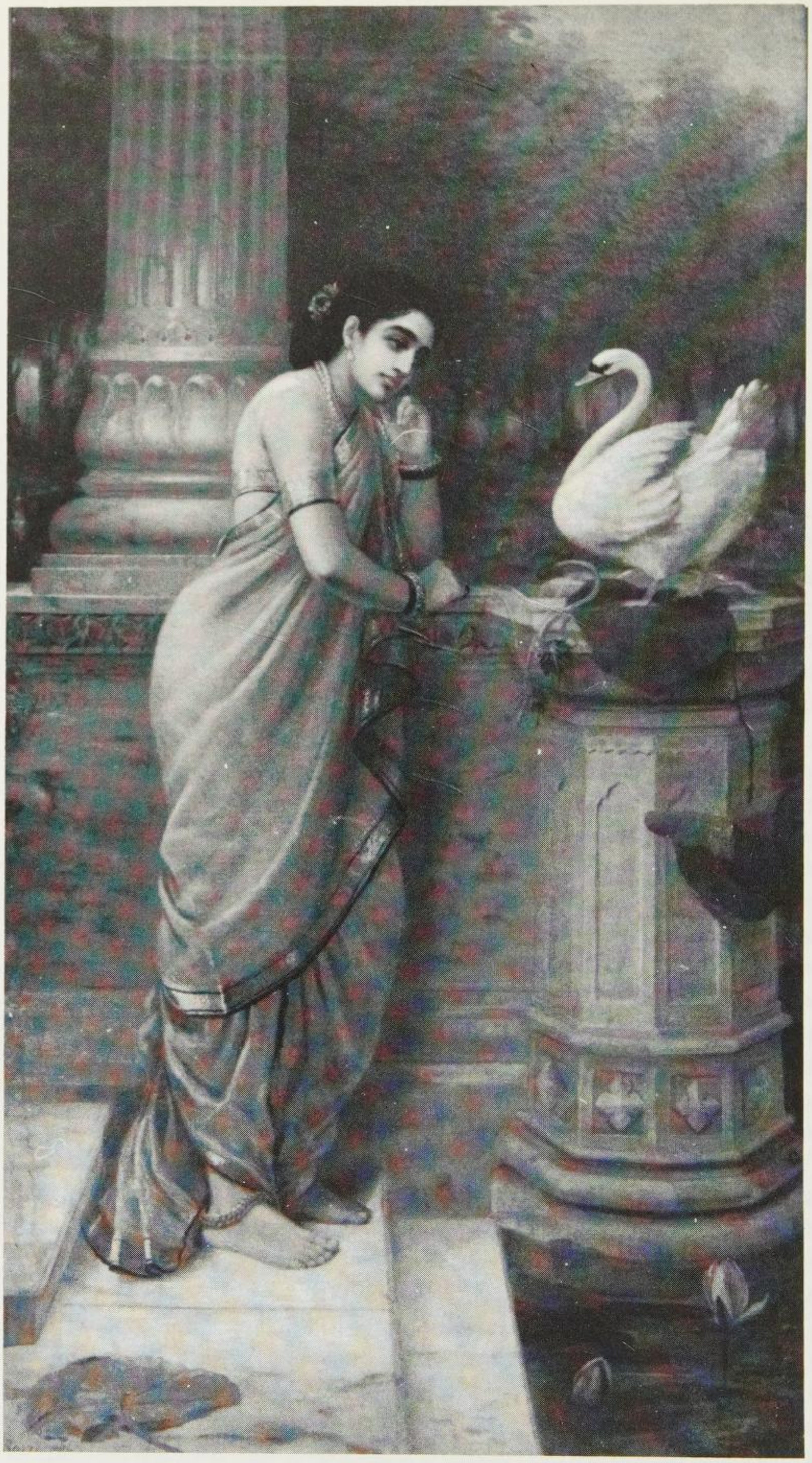
As with their business acumen, the brothers' social life and artistic outlook were a mixture of western and eastern elements. The *artistes pompiers* were their role model. As Raja confided about 'the great French artist' Meissonier: 'I am an admirer of his style and manner. How I wish I had seen some of his original works. His fidelity to nature, management of chiaroscuro and feeling for tone are admirable. His life is very instructive'.[44] Indeed, the Varmas' professionalism reminds us of Victorian painters. Throughout his career Ravi Varma adhered to a work ethic, which was alien to his semi-feudal milieu. He constantly exhorted his

nephews to enter the world of modern professions. Yet, his Hindu persona took him on pilgrimages and made him plan his retirement at sixty as prescribed by the sacred texts. His greatest desire was to go abroad to study western art, a wish thwarted by his fear of losing caste. Few Hindus of his time dared cross 'the black waters'. It is the peaceful co-existence of these two worlds in Varma that is so fascinating. He does not seem to have suffered an identity crisis, which is a reflection of the optimistic stage of colonial acculturation (there were exceptions of course as in Bengal and Maharastra). But then it is only from today's perspective that we would expect such a crisis. A hundred years ago modern Hindu identity had yet to be clearly defined.[45]

The life of society portraitists

A typical day of Ravi and Raja Varma gives us a vivid idea about their professional routine. In Bombay, it was a settled existence completing commissions. For Ravi, who was more orthodox than his brother, the day began with a ritual bath and prayer, followed by a long working period, punctuated by an afternoon siesta. The work was efficiently divided into portrait commissions with tight deadlines, and more leisurely production of works for competition. While Ravi concentrated on mythological pictures, Raja painted landscapes when not assisting his brother in 'more serious [portrait] work'. He also did the details in Ravi's mythological paintings, such as the pillar in *Hamsa Damayantī* (Fig. 119). Outside working hours, they browsed at the Taraporevala Bookshop, entertained friends and visited the theatre. On the evening of 6 August 1901, for instance, the Varmas saw a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* in Hindustani. They spent summer and monsoon months in the city, going back to Kerala at the approach of autumn. During the monsoons the paint took longer to dry and the light was 'unsteady'. The problem of the light was solved in 1903 when the roof of their Bombay studio was glazed. There were complaints in the diary about dull Sundays, especially wet ones, when the newspaper was not delivered, which had become 'as indispensable as one's morning coffee or tea'.[46]

The brothers often undertook several paintings at once, the studio resembling that of a European portraitist with three or four paintings at different stages of completion. While they negotiated for Ranade's memorial portrait, for instance, they worked on other commissions. As a portrait was delivered to one client, Raja wrote to another about a further commission. Some of their time was spent on altering or making copies of their own pictures, again something that was part of a European painter's daily routine. The Varmas often had to accede to even unreasonable demands of clients: Mrs Jagmohan Das and Mrs Bhaiseth insisted on alterations to their portraits, which led Raja to complain, 'It is difficult to



119 Ravi Varma: *Hamsa Damayantī*, oil

deal with women; they are never satisfied with their dress or ornaments. She insisted on wearing a sari which was most difficult to paint effectively. They think that the greater the labour they give the artist the better the picture becomes'. On framing, the Varmas had a standing arrangement with a Bombay firm and the charge was added to the portrait. In 1903, for instance, an extra Rs 175 was added on to an official portrait.[47]

In some ways, the most interesting entries in the diary are details of portrait work. 'We went this morning with Bapuji to the Fort to see a wealthy *bania* [merchant]', wrote Raja Varma in July 1901, 'a mill owner [Assur Virji] who wants his whole length portrait to be painted. He is an old man and readily agreed to our terms. We shall begin the work soon. His son is an intelligent young man and is an amateur photographer. We mean first to take a photo of the old gentleman in the position in which we intend to paint him'. On 22 July, they visited their client for a preliminary measurement of his face as they normally did with sitters. However, Virji was away and the artists commenced the actual portrait, continuing the next day. On the 25th, the drawing was corrected and the foreground started. On the 27th, they painted details of his dress, while in the evening they concentrated on a different portrait. On 5 August, the portrait was finished, even though the left hand was not totally satisfactory, and needed subsequent retouching.[48]

In Madras also the brothers spent a considerable time painting high officials (2 September 1902–2 January 1903). Rs 3,000 was paid for life-size memorial portraits of Sir George Moore for the Municipal Hall and of the ex-Governor, Sir Arthur Havelock, for the elegant Banqueting Hall. This was the last year of their collaboration before Raja's early death, soon to be followed by that of Ravi Varma. They had many friends in the southern capital which was the scene of Ravi's triumphs at the Society of Fine Arts. Here they were guests of an influential friend, and painted his portrait in appreciation. As always on their tours, they brought a retinue of servants with them.[49]

Moore was mainly painted by Raja, who was now given more responsible work. An hour and a half was spent each day, but even at the eighth sitting he felt that the face posed difficulties. Meanwhile they worked on the carpet 'of our own choosing of an intricate design' in the foreground of the picture. The finished work pleased the subject and Edgar Thurston, Secretary of the Fine Arts Society. The portrait of Havelock was based on a photograph, since he had already left India. Nonetheless, the artists succeeded in achieving the likeness, by modifying the picture on the advice of his friends. Havelock wrote from Tasmania:

> You have given me an opportunity of repeating the admiration I feel for the artistic skill shown by yourself and your brother in . . . the memorial portrait of myself . . . His excellency the Governor and others who have

> seen the portrait all join in testifying to [its] merits . . . as a work of art and to the excellence of the likeness . . .[50]

Two Indian judges of the local Lawyers' Association were also painted by them. All the while, the younger brother did not neglect his landscapes. But outdoor sketching had its hazards. Raja was prevented from drawing a bridge in Madras by a crowd of onlookers; but a mosque en route to Mylapore proved easier to paint. Ravi and Raja received a visit from two Englishwomen, their admirers and stalwarts of the Fine Arts Society. The brothers, who admired the landscapes of one of the women, Mrs Atkinson, did a portrait of her husband in exchange for her work.[51]

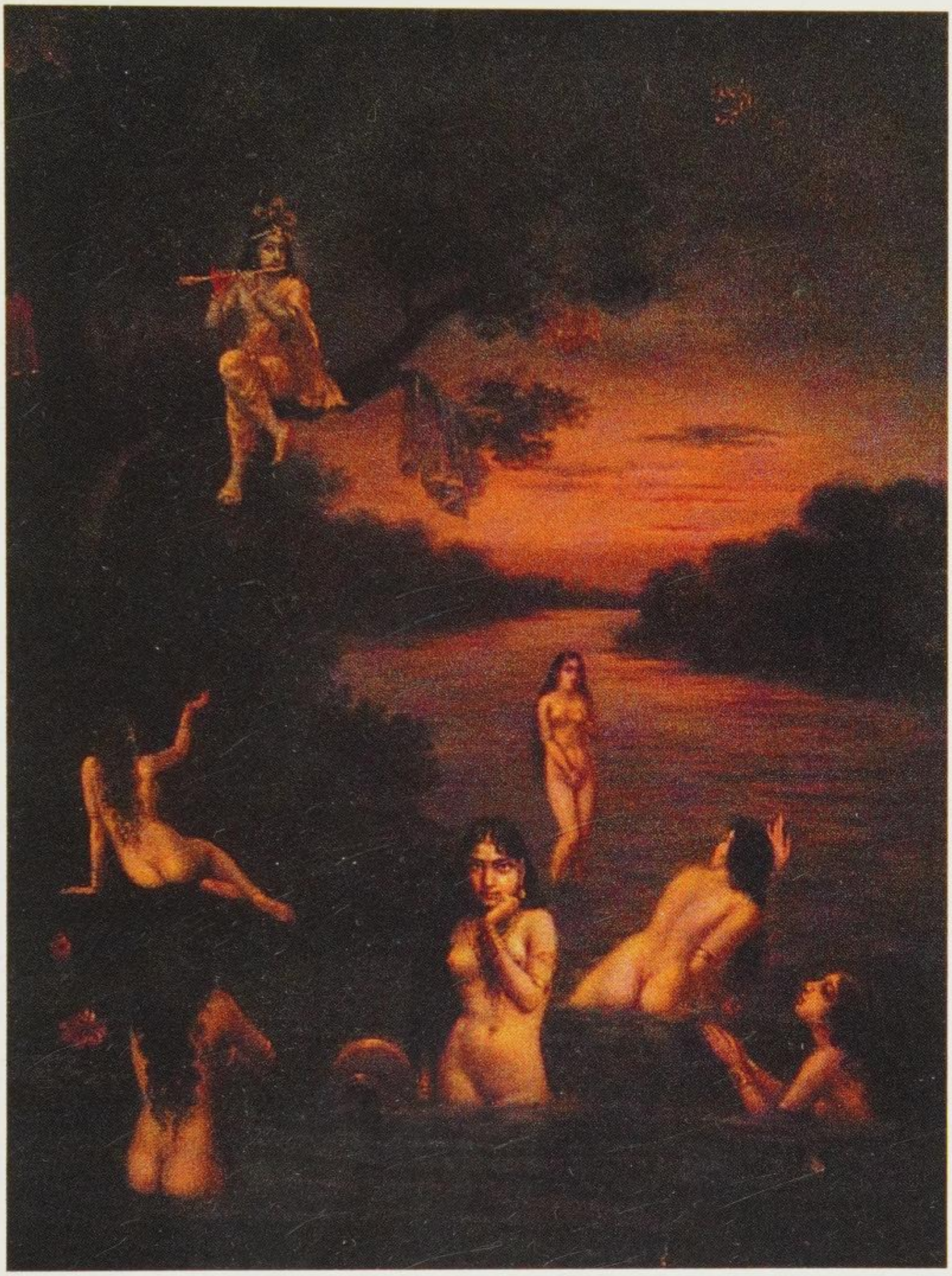
The itinerant professionals

Ravi and Raja Varma also journeyed in fulfilment of commissions, chiefly in princely states. A rewarding three months was spent in Udaipur and an unsuccessful period in Hyderabad, a fact that highlights the uncertainties of an artistic career in this period. They also visited Ahmedabad as guests of affluent *banias*. In these late years, Ravi's second son, Rama, training to be a painter, accompanied them. These years hint at the brothers' failing health: Ravi suffered from an excess of blood sugar, Raja an undiagnosed malignancy. Unhealthy accommodation, strange diets and unaccustomed routine began to tell on them.[52]

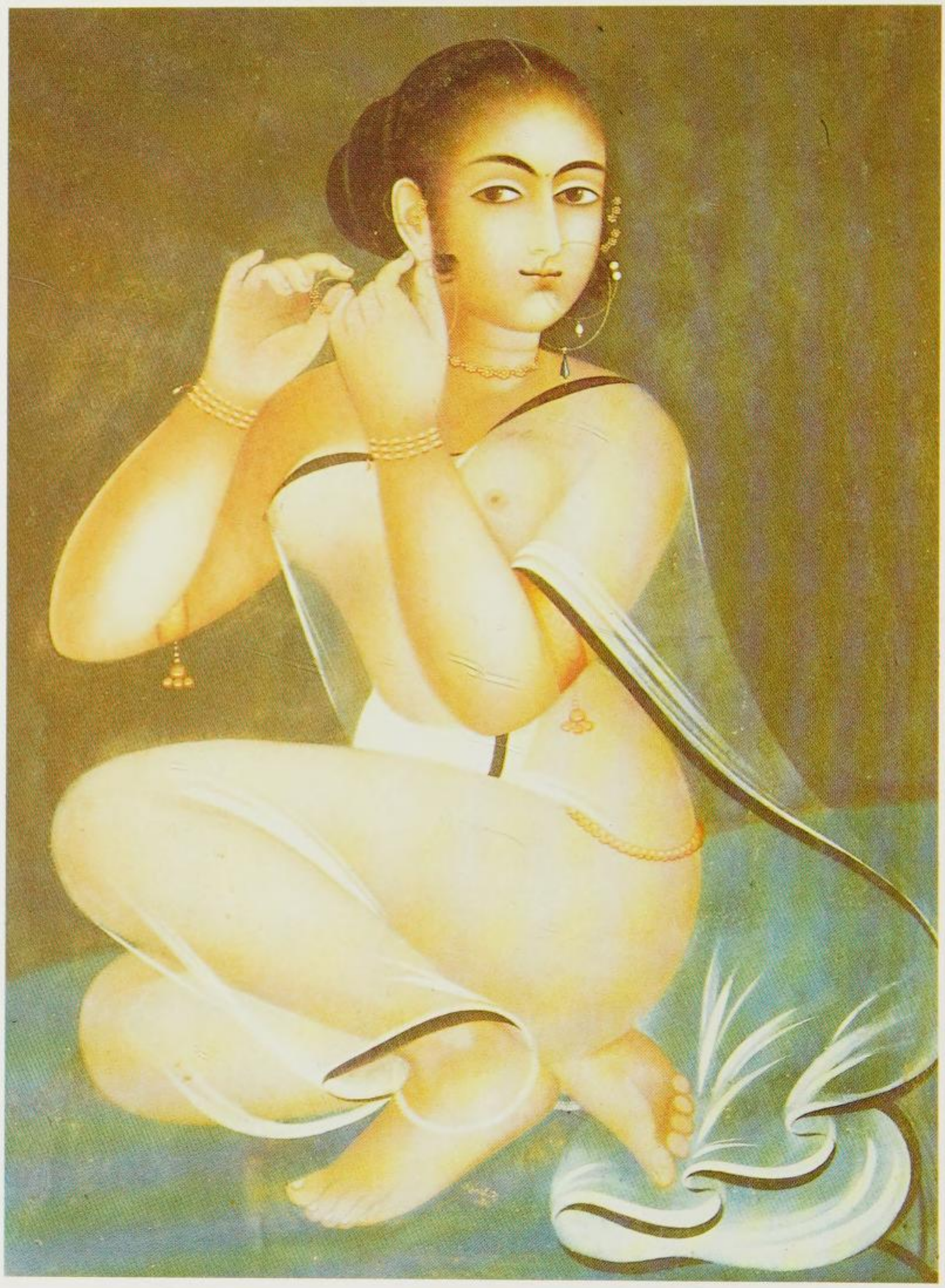
But ill health did not impair professional standards. In Ahmedabad (26 February–14 March), where they finished eight portraits, they were guests of a wealthy merchant, Chinubhai Madhavlal. In addition to his own father's portrait, Chinubhai also arranged for them to paint Ambalal Sarabhai, the twelve-year-old son of a Jain merchant, later a close associate of Gandhi. Along with the boy's bust, the artists painted a portrait of his late father based on a photograph.[53]

In several respects the Udaipur assignment (16 March–1 July 1901) was the most important one of their last decade. Maharana Fateh Singh, a descendant of the fiercely independent Sisodia clan, enjoyed social precedence among the Indian princes. In Udaipur, unlike Travancore or Baroda, limited reforms, initiated through the pro-British Dewan, Pannalal Mehta (Fig. 120), were brought to a halt with Fateh Singh's accession. Fatehlal, who was responsible for inviting the Varmas, had replaced his father Pannalal as Dewan. For the Varmas to be invited to Udaipur, one of the last bastions of Rajput painting, was a coup (even though the Maharana had sent Kundan Lal abroad). Proud of his ancient lineage, Fateh Singh engaged the Varmas to make large copies of the traditional miniature portraits of the ancestors.[54]

The diary throws light on an interesting practice. Before a commission

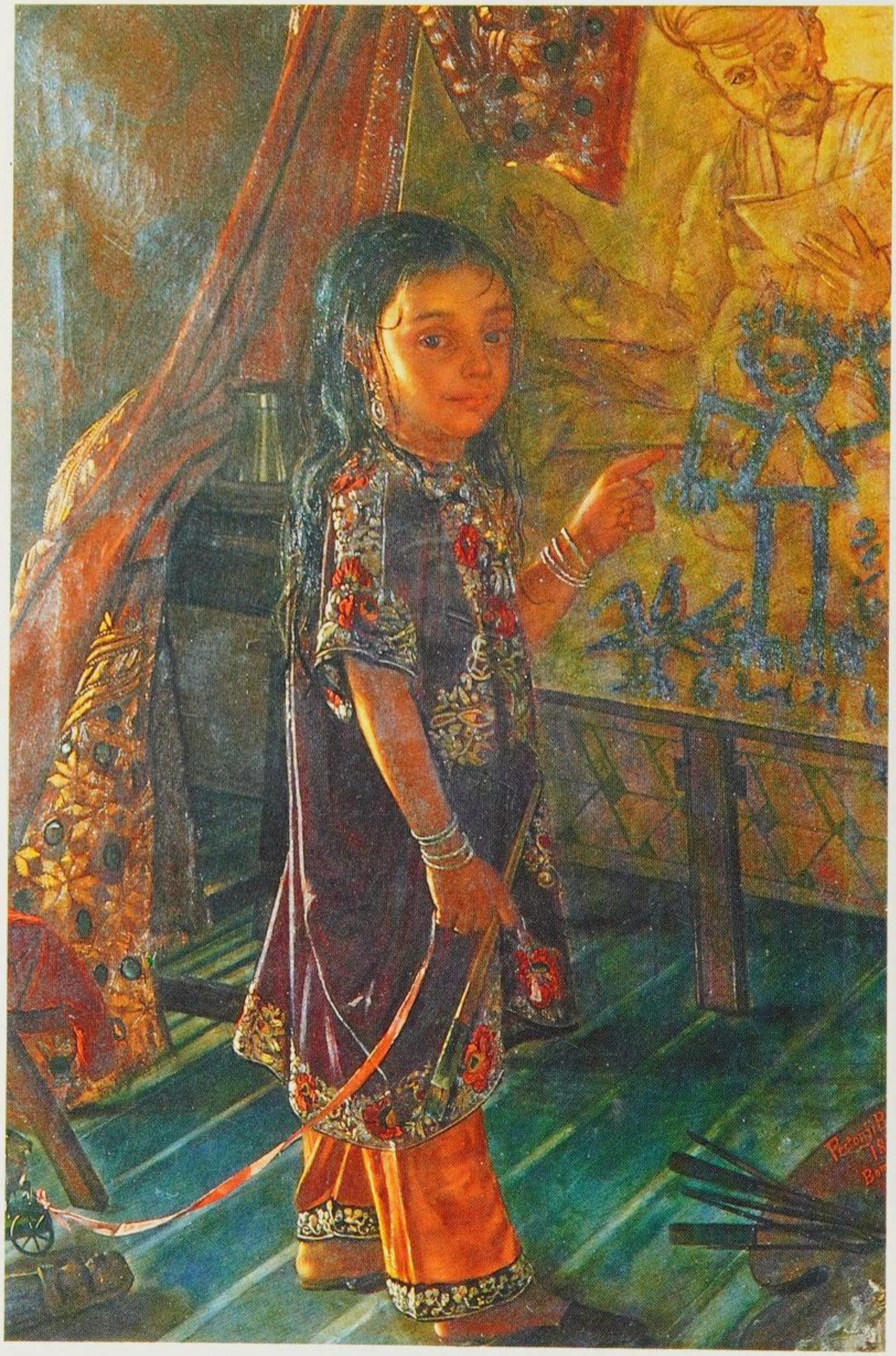


I Oil from Bengal: *Kṛṣṇa and Gopīs*. A popular conventional subject, especially the figures, given European treatment in a pre-art-school manner

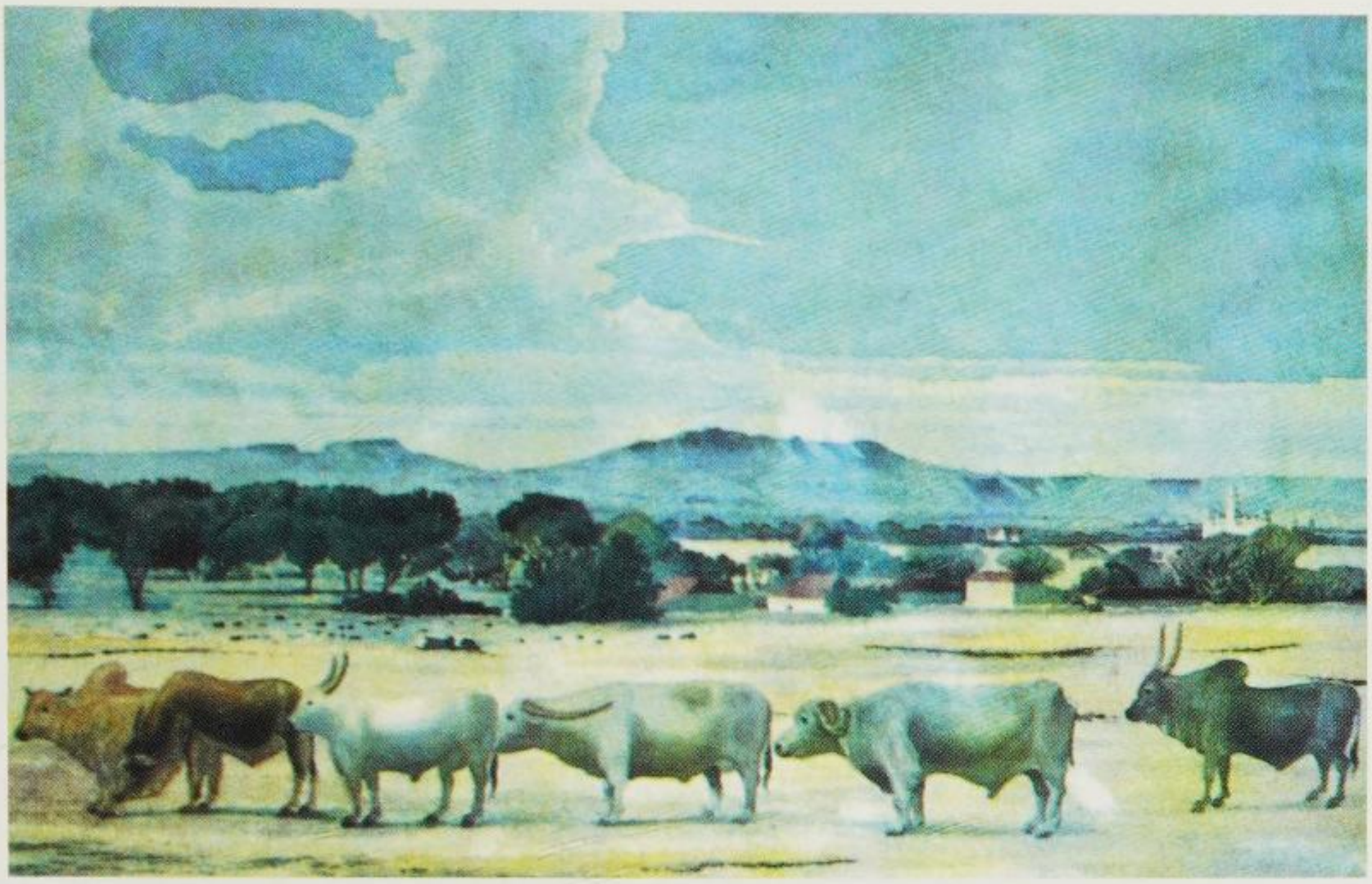


II Oil on board: *Woman Putting on Earrings*, not only uses the same iconography as Fig. 8 but retains the character of the Kalighat-inspired print

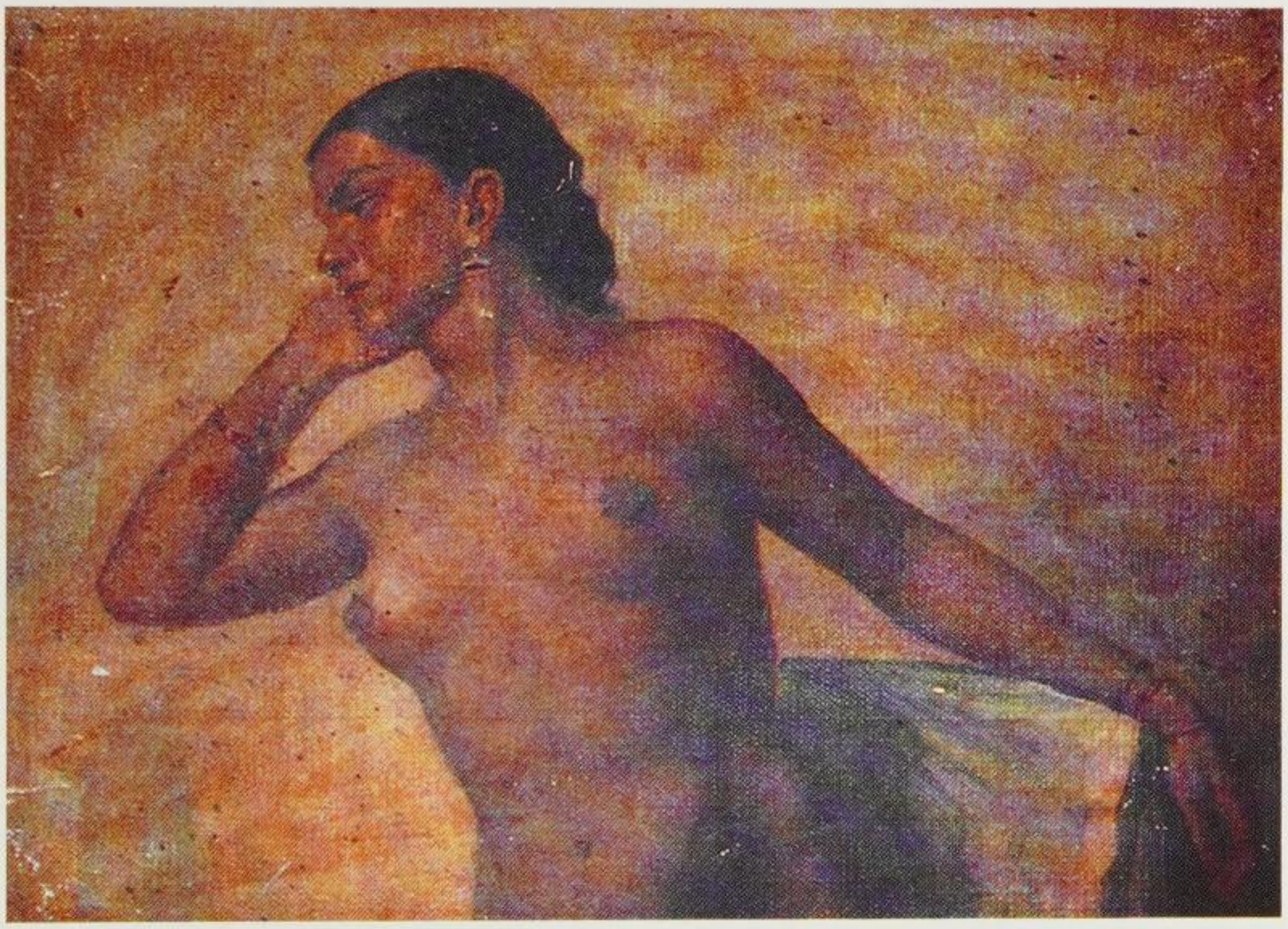
III Pottery with Ajanta motif from Bombay art school



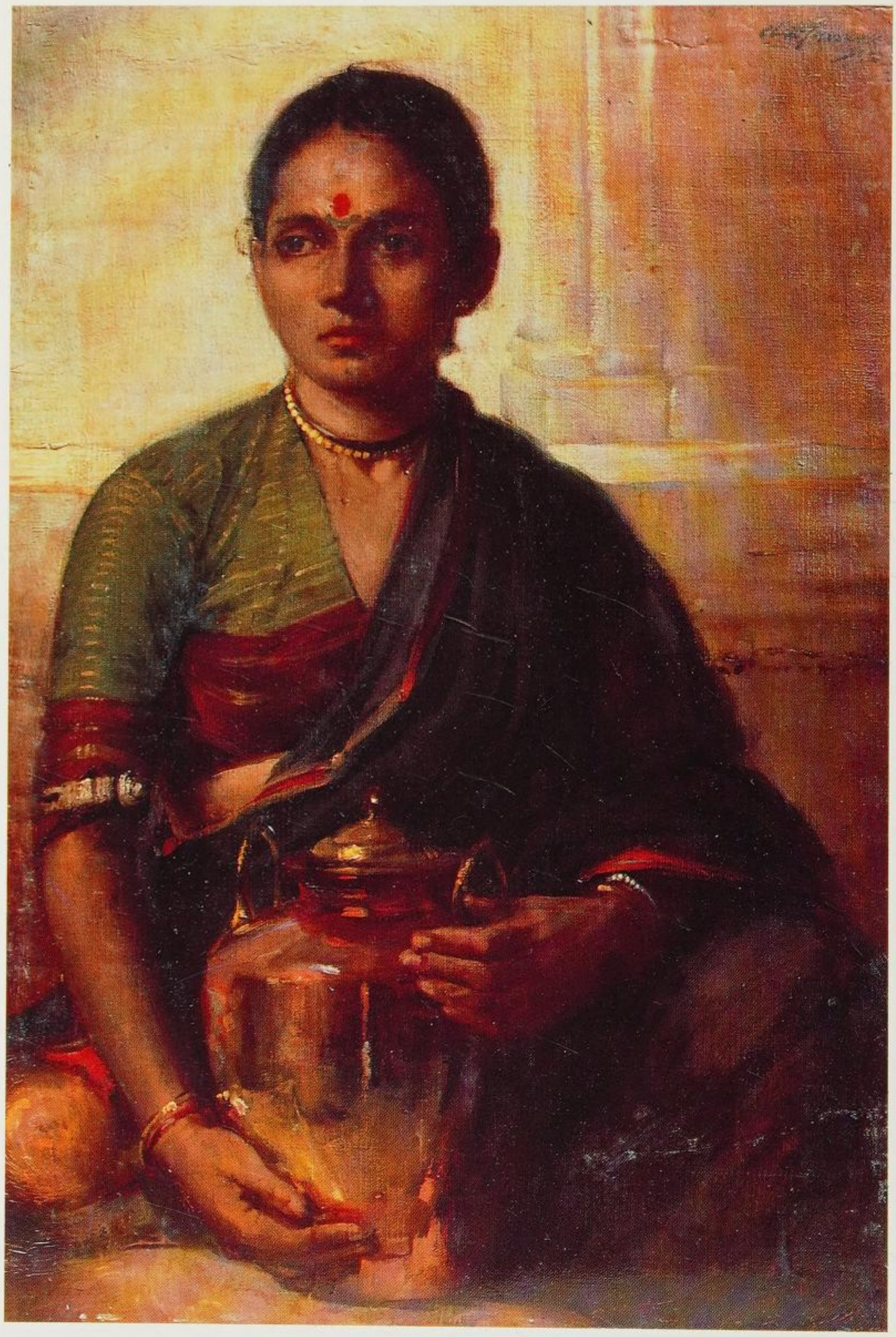
IV Pestonji Bomanji: *The Parsi Girl*, oil, 1887



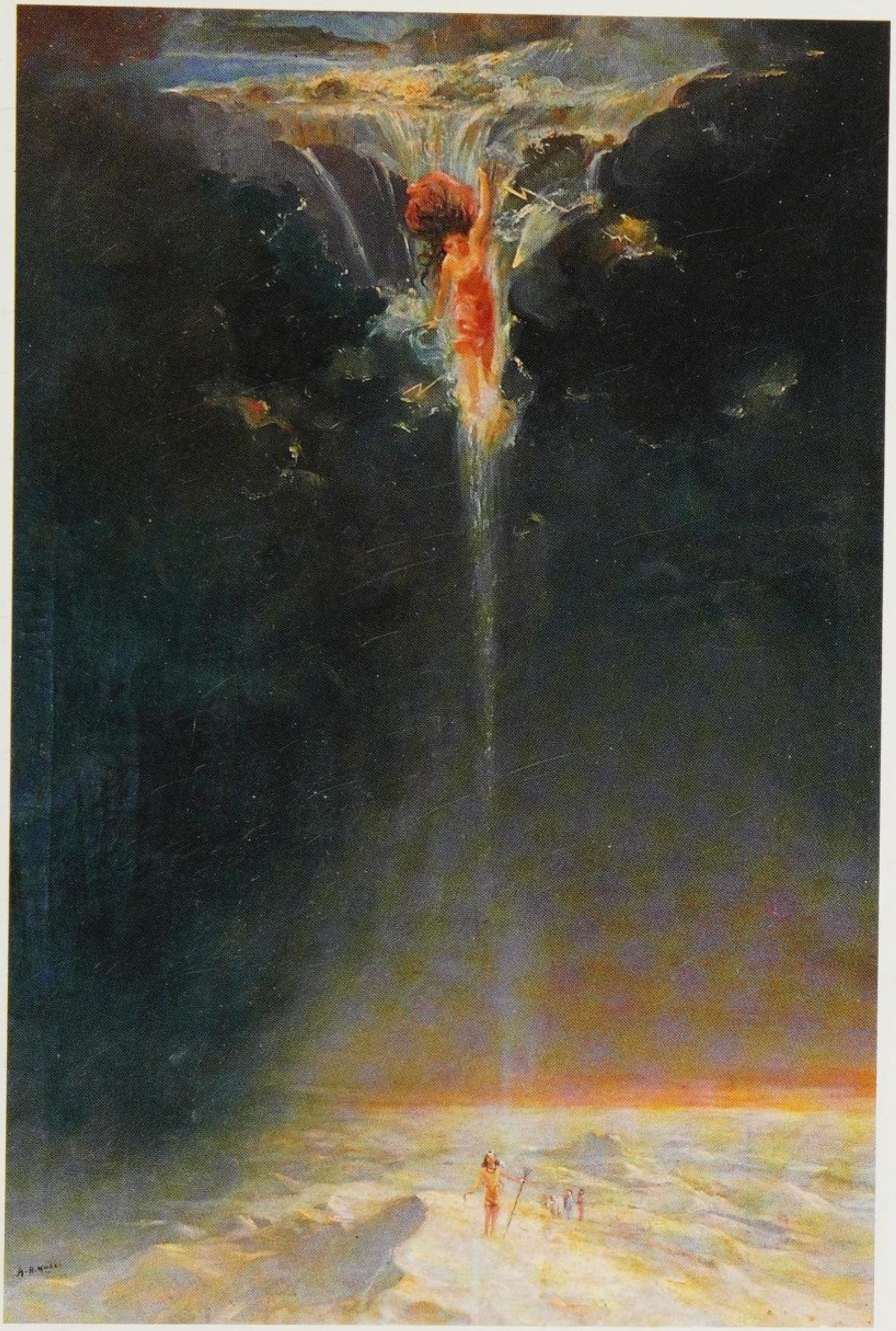
V Abalal Rahiman: *Landscape*, watercolour



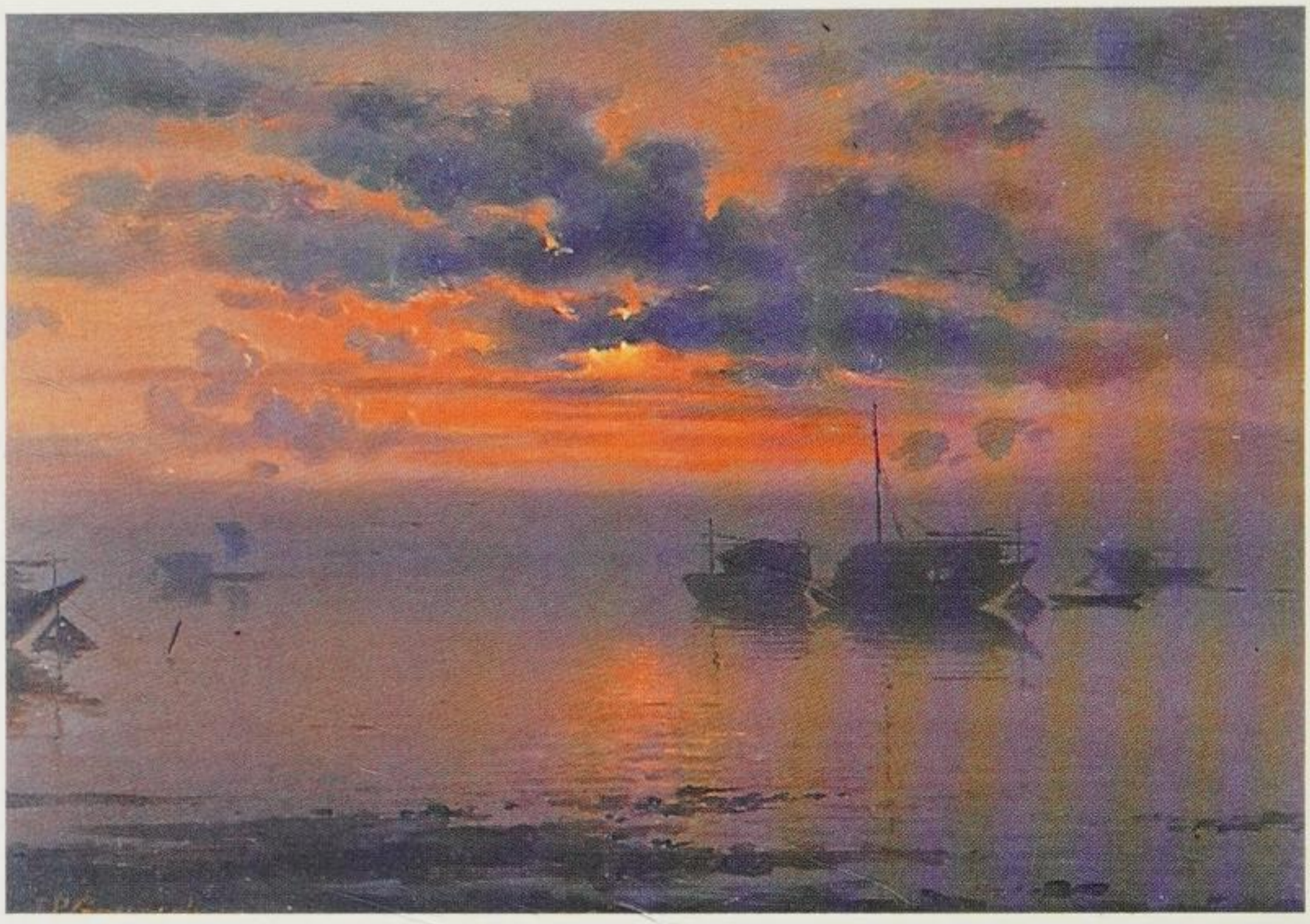
VI M. V. Dhurandhar: *Nude*, oil. The model is the same one used by Trindade (Fig. 59) and the treatment of the two painters is strikingly similar



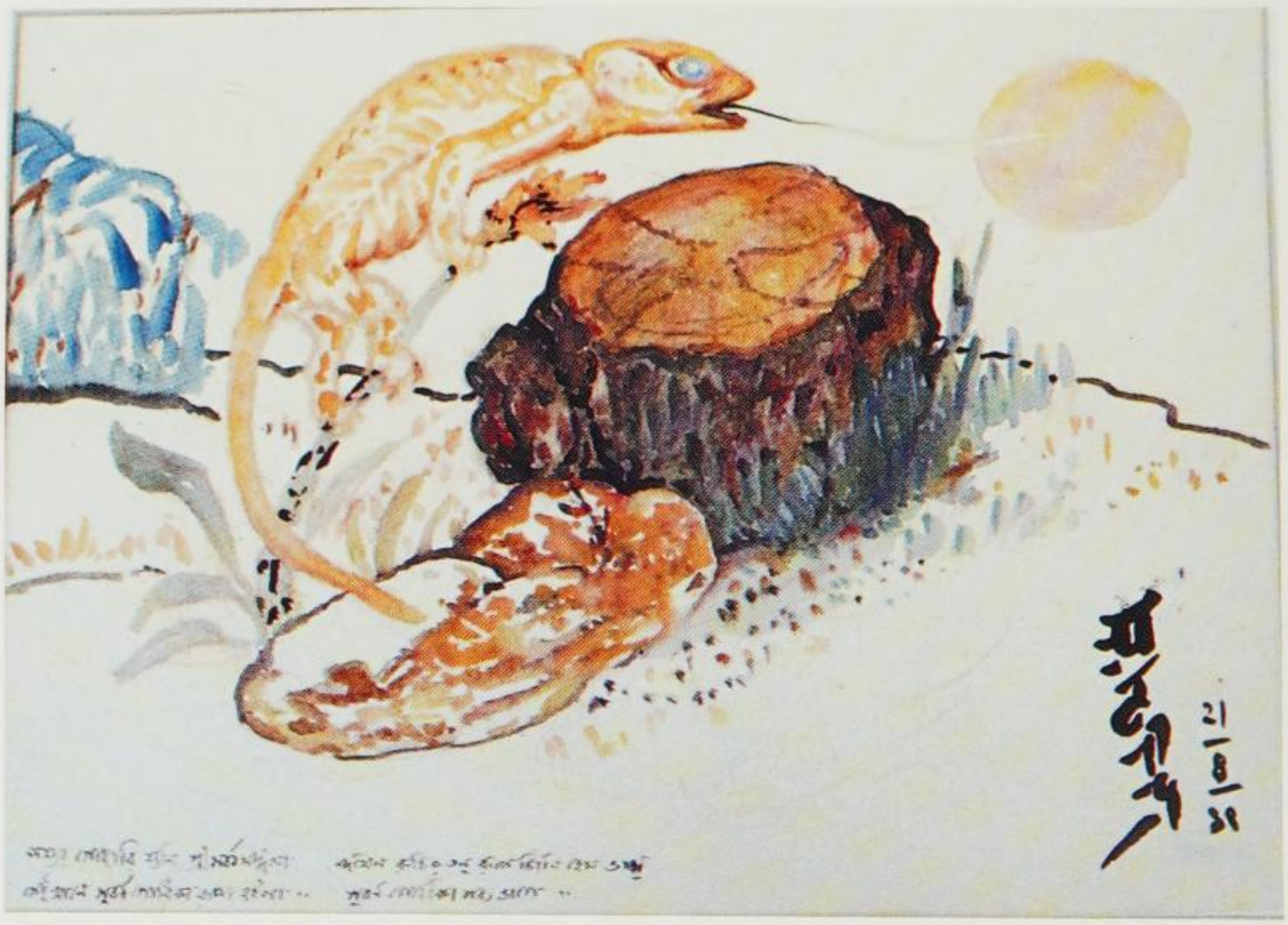
VII A. X. Trindade: *A Hindu Girl*, oil



VIII A. H. Muller: *Gaṇgā's Descent to Pātāla* (Gangavatarana), oil



IX J. P. Gangooly: *Evening*, oil



X Abanindranath Tagore, *The Golden Lizard*, Illustration to *Kabikankan Chandi* (1938)

XI Gagenendranath Tagore: *Dhānyeswari*, hand-coloured lithograph. The modern hypocritical Brahmin who indulges in meat, alcohol and whores, instead of spending life in pious activities, an indictment of western ways?

এ, এচ, জহরের অভিবাদন সহ প্রীতি উপহার।
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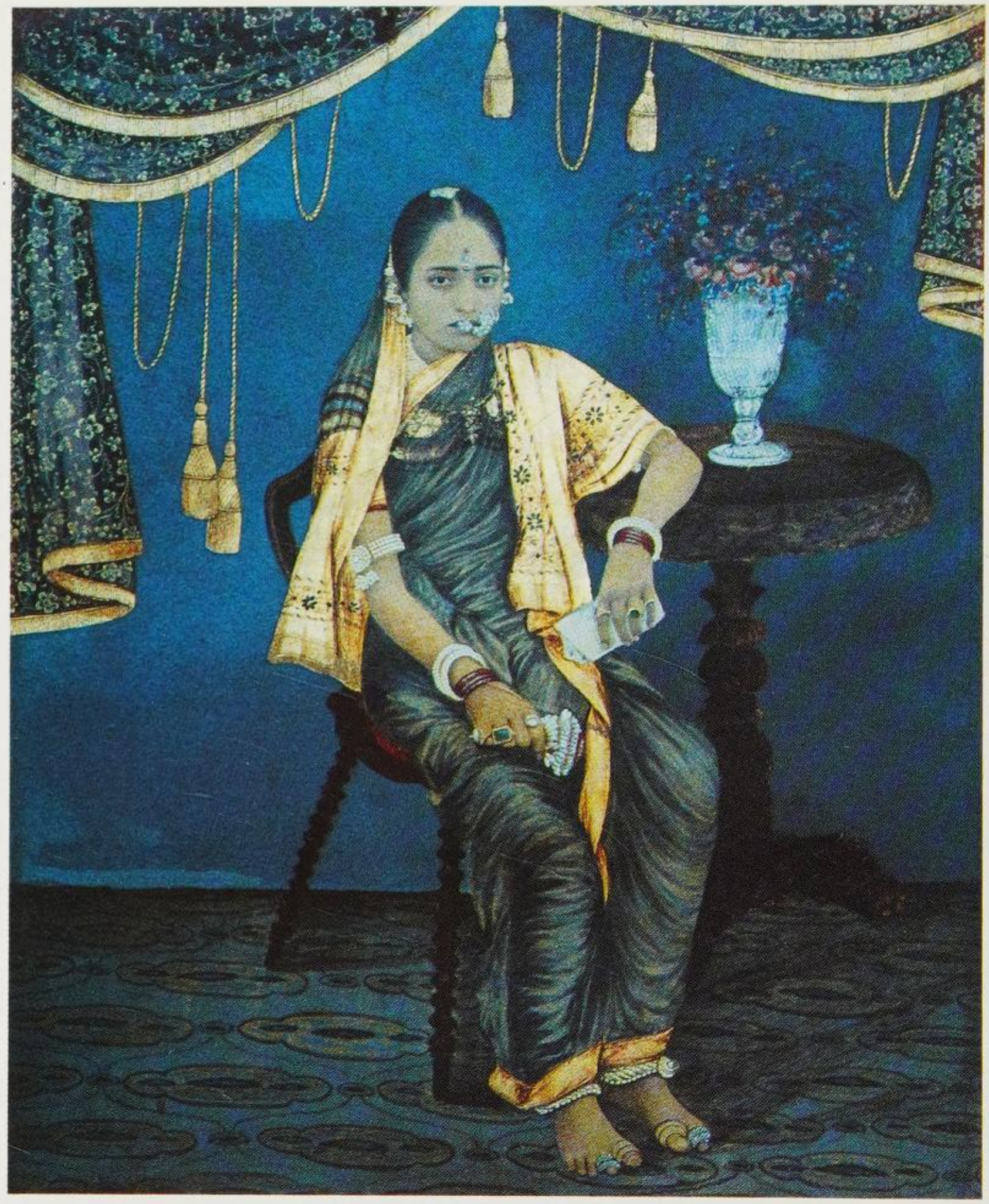
বিশুদ্ধ স্বদেশী
সোল এজেণ্ট এ, এচ, জহর।

XII Calcutta Art Studio: *Kālī*, lithograph. The conventional iconography probably carried a hidden political message in its colour symbolism of the black goddess dominating a supine white-skinned Siva

XIII Ramaswamy Naidu: *Three Śūdra Girls*, oil

XIV Tanjore School: *Portrait of a Ruler*, tempera. Note the similarities of colour and treatment with Fig. XIII



XV Ravi Varma: *Princess Tara Bai* (1871–97), oil

was offered, the artist had to produce a sample of his work on the spot. A life-size copy of one of Maharana's ancestors was duly made by the Varmas. However, anticipating a long wait while Fatehlal conducted the negotiations, Raja embarked on landscapes. Ravi's sketch of a tribal woman dates from the same period. The brothers were initially put up in an unhealthy place, but were permitted to move to a more agreeable one. Here, as in other places they visited, the leading people in the area called on them because of their reputation and social standing. Europeans,

120 Ravi Varma: *Dewan Pannalal Mehta*, oil

including the English Resident, met them and the retired Dewan Pannalal sat for them.[55]

Once the sample was approved by the ruler, Fatehlal secured three further orders. The artists were astonished at the precise details about previous rulers furnished by the palace. Their most important assignment was Rana Pratap, the Rajput hero and nationalist idol. A *pandit* at the court was consulted on Pratap's accoutrements. The armoury supplied an appropriate helmet and chain-mail. A tall Rajput, 'a true knight of old', was sent to serve as a model. After his form was sketched, Pratap's face was copied from an old miniature and added on to it. The neighbouring hill provided the background. Finally all the elements were put together in the painting (Fig. 121).[56]

Impressed with the work, the Maharana consented to sit for a full-length portrait. The brothers studied his features from a photograph. However, even after commissioning the portrait, the cautious prince demanded an initial sketch to check the likeness. This posed no special problem, for Raja was confident that 'the likeness [would] become exact at the next sitting'. Indeed the commission was clinched after the second sitting. Then the ruler's face and height were measured for the life-size picture. There were inevitable interruptions to the sittings because the princely subject tired readily and took off on hunting expeditions. While the work was in progress, the canvas was regularly despatched to the Palace for advice on alterations.[57]

Raja Varma offers a candid appraisal of his regal sitter. The prince was too shrewd generally to volunteer an opinion, but maintained a tight rein over the work as it progressed, mostly approving but occasionally suggesting changes. He settled the financial details beforehand, in order to avoid subsequent disputes. 'He never speaks what he thinks of the picture', writes Raja Varma, 'but makes his favourites suggest improvements. As they are ignorant of art they say all sorts of nonsense. He is at the same time careful in telling us not to meddle with the picture unless we agree with the suggestions'. The last sitting found the Maharana in a relaxed mood, expressing his opinions more freely. His parting gifts were a pearl necklace and a robe. In return, the artists offered him a preparatory sketch for his portrait and a landscape by Raja Varma. The total remuneration received for the five portraits was Rs 5,500, a handsome fee for those days.[58]

Less congenial was the trip (January–April 1902) to Hyderabad, at the invitation of Raja Deen Dayal, the Nizam's court photographer. Here too, they complained, their commission depended on a 'fancy' trial picture for the Nizam's approval. They were first asked to 'improve' a gloomy painting by an English artist in which 'the distance was so dark that it distorted the perspective'.[59] Raja made the darkness recede by a coat of delicate pink. While waiting for the Nizam's approval, the younger brother embarked on his landscapes with a sketch of the local Husayn Sagar Lake.[60]

The diary throws light on an acute problem faced by early salon artists: the difficulty of finding models during this period, let alone nude ones. For Ravi's painting, *At the Bath*, which required a draped figure, Raja and his artist friends chose a Muslim girl 'with a charming face' from the local red light district. But she never turned up. 'These prostitutes', complained Raja bitterly, 'readily come if called for immoral purposes, but when

121 Ravi Varma: *Rana Pratap*, oil (smaller version of the main portrait in Udaipur)

required for posing they raise great objections'.[61] The Varmas, keen on costume painting in the manner of the 'olympians', befriended an English photographer, Miss Sabina, who posed in Egyptian dress for them. She had been captivated by their work. Because respectable women did not appear in public, special 'zenana' studios were set up in this period by European women like Sabina. In 1882 Deen Dayal opened 'a zenana studio [and] placed an English lady of high photographic attainments . . . in charge of it'.[62]

By the second month the brothers began to tire of trying to fathom the labyrinthine intricacies of the Nizam's court. In desperation they chose a Johnston and Hoffman photograph to begin a life-size portrait of the Nizam. Why did they not borrow one from their host Deen Dayal, who was Nizam's own photographer? This suggests worsening relations between the painter and the photographer. Though Dayal had initially invited Ravi Varma, professional jealousy had taken over. Despite the advent of the camera, painted portraits still carried greater prestige.[63]

Doubting the honourable intentions of the court photographer, the Varmas moved out of his residence. They were now advised to take their works to the Nizam's minister's residence in the hope of catching the ruler's eye when he visited his minister. Before this elaborate charade could be put to the test, the brothers were summoned home for an urgent reason. The episode of the Nizam's portrait did not end there. In 1903, after protracted bickering, the Varmas let the portrait go for half its asked price. The experience made them wary of future princely commissions. When they were invited by the zamindar of Gondal, they insisted on settling the charge and return train fare to the state beforehand. But in the absence of a formal contract even famous artists were always at the mercy of their clients. Raja complained of the mean *banias* who always bargained over price. Whatever the fee, the actual payment depended on the artist's ability to coerce his client and sometimes even Ravi Varma's high reputation was of little avail.[64]

FROM COLONIAL ARTIST TO NATIONAL IDOL

A painter for the Raj

In the second half of the nineteenth century, mammoth international expositions became the vogue, beginning with the Great Exhibition of 1851, with each country vying to outdo others in lavishness. The grandest show of them all was the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. It was appropriate that Varma represented India at Chicago. No artist in India had won so many prizes, as *The Times* obituary was to remind its readers.[65] The two awards he received at Chicago confirmed

his stature not only as a colonial artist, but as the non-European who had mastered academic art. His ten oils were displayed under the rubric, 'Institutions and Organisations for the Increase and Diffusion of Knowledge', the award in recognition of 'the progress of instruction in Art. They are true to nature in form and colour'.[66]

Varma was ignored by the considerable fine arts pavilion in Chicago. His paintings and Lala Deen Dayal's photographs were relegated to the ethnographic section, underlining the European categorisation of non-western artists. The second award described his works as being of

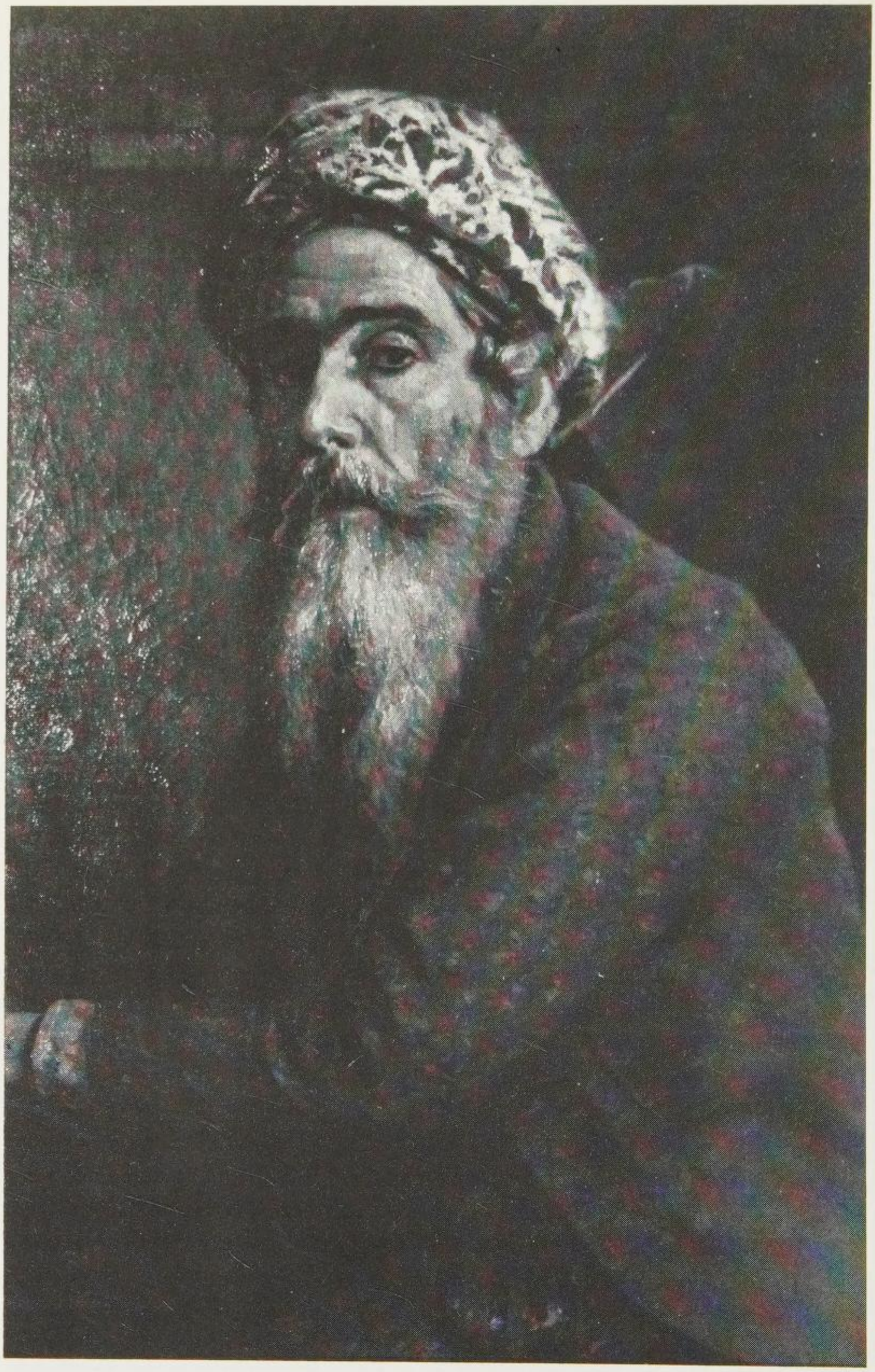
> much ethnological value; not only do the faces of the high caste ladies . . . give the various types of the localities, but the artist's careful attention to the details of costume and article used in the social and ceremonial life . . . renders the paintings worthy of special commendation.[67]

Though Varma's own choice of beautiful women from different regions of India (Fig. XVIII) was dictated by his growing perception of India as one nation, the judges were more impressed with the ethnographic content of his works.

Grand history-painting for the nation

Yet it was not portraits but his historical paintings that brought him to public notice, as once again observed by *The Times*.[68] Narrative art was not new to India. But illusionist painting as a vehicle for story telling by presenting 'a frozen moment', was a western invention. Indians were moved by the melodramatic and the sentimental, a predilection to be found in full measure in Varma. Almost all his compositions, apart from formal portraits, bore sentimental captions in the salon tradition. In Bombay, he engaged 'a fine specimen of an old Jew' to model a picturesque subject for an exhibition. When finished, the canvas was named *The Miser* (Fig. 122), a title meant to evoke the stereotype of the mean Jew. In Varma's works the beholder completed the story suggested in the picture. His *Poverty*, for instance, was designed in the Victorian fashion to manipulate the beholder's feelings.[69]

Of all narrative art, none was more admired by the Royal Academy than paintings with lofty moral lessons. The encouragement of history painting, the most 'dignified' branch of the art, followed the growth of 'civic humanism' because it was seen to promote public interest. For Reynolds, history painting, like Classical rhetoric, enabled us to recognise our true and universal nature and raised art above manual dexterity.[70] Unsurprisingly, the English rulers were keen to introduce the genre for the moral upliftment of their subjects, since Indian miniatures could never stir the soul. It is not recorded if Ravi Varma heard Lord Napier's address to Indian artists on the powers of history painting.[71] At all events, the stage was already set for his début in this area.



122 Ravi Varma: *The Miser*, oil

History painting was no less logical a choice for the Indian intelligentsia. Indian art of the period was steeped in historicism, the restoration of the past emerging as a sacred duty for the nationalist. Varma was the first Indian painter to evolve a new language of narrative art, aimed at what Reynolds called sending 'the imagination back to antiquity'. Yet, as someone raised on the Victorian mimetic canon, Varma saw nothing incongruous in using it for his 'authentic' re-creations of the Hindu past.[72]

As with the 'olympians', so with Varma the line between history and myth was thinly drawn. In any case, *Purāṇas* still form some of the most important sources for Indian history. Varma was not the first Indian history painter; in 1871 Tinkari Mukherjee had submitted a work inspired by a Sanskrit classic to the nationalist fair in Bengal, some seven years before Varma's famous *Śakuntalā*. But Varma was unrivalled in his strategy for re-creating a romantic past, founded on Sanskrit classics. First, Varma was well versed in Sanskrit, his Brahmin father's legacy.[73] Secondly, his literary 'historicism' was in line with the ideals of high art in the West. We know that Meissonier and Bouguereau were admired by the Keralan. If the slightly 'fussy' reconstructions of Varma seem contrived to us, 'historicism' was the favourite pastime of history painters. David was the first artist to re-create the Classical world through meticulous 'archaeological' details.[74]

Let us take Varma's quest for ancient India: after winning the important Baroda commission of history paintings, he went on a tour of India, excited by the prospect of discovering ancient costumes. Soon he was forced to conclude that Muslim rule had obliterated all traces of the ancient mode of dressing.[75] The failure of Varma's 'archaeological' enterprise had to do with his colonial outlook. In his youth, his knowledge of ancient art derived almost entirely from *The Hindu Pantheon* by Edward Moor, a pioneer work in the British 'discovery of Hinduism'. Varma, like many educated Indians of the time, was yet to discover ancient art, then coming to light through archaeological researches. On their visit to Karle, the brothers treated the scanty clothing of Buddhist figures as objects of mild curiosity, but not appropriate for Ravi Varma's 'proper' heroines from Sanskrit literature.[76] One can guess that Varma's reading of Kalidasa ignored the explicit passages as unsuited to his age.

Equally, the Varmas found Rajput and Mughal miniatures at Baroda alien to their taste. 'In some pictures there is such imagination but there are also decorative features', wrote Raja. While copying Udaipur miniatures, he noted that there was 'little of nature [in them], painted in the old conventional style, face, profile and the feet turned in the same direction'. By contrast, the brothers were thrilled to see a Rembrandt owned by a European, concluding shrewdly that it was a copy, for they had seen it reproduced elsewhere. While it is true that miniatures were not so

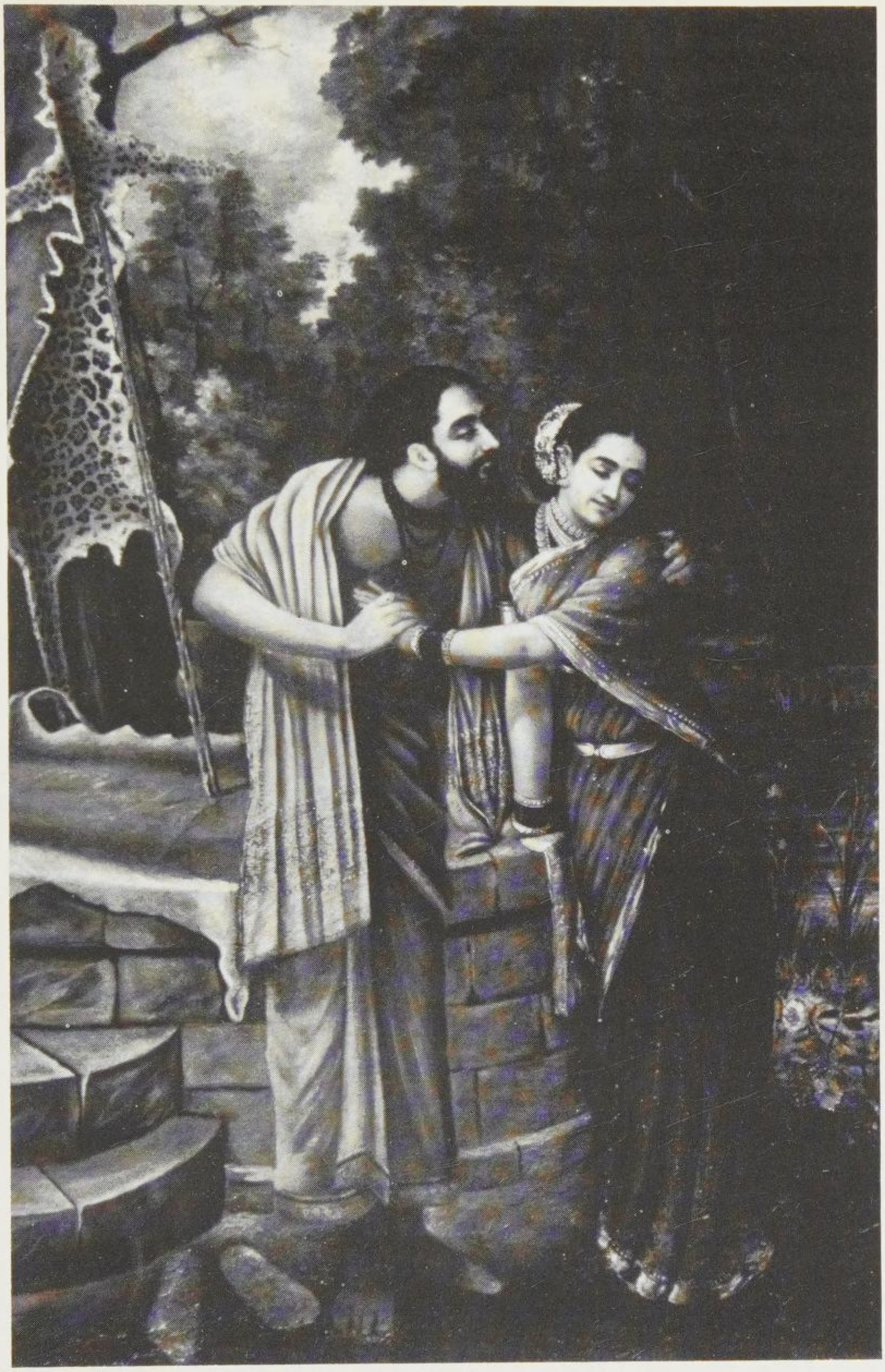
familiar in Kerala, the brothers' reaction reveals the influence of colonial aesthetics.[77]

Ravi Varma's new iconographic programme drew copiously on the epics, the *Purāṇas* and the plays of Kalidasa and other Sanskrit authors. The painter even engaged a traditional narrator, whose photograph survives, to ransack the classics. This practice of consulting *pandits* for advice on iconography was common, especially among Pahari painters. However, even when using the classics, Varma carefully selected the stories that plucked the beholder's heartstrings. The appeal of his heroines, for instance, lay in the fact that they were not iconographic types, but palpable, desirable human beings. The British public too in this period preferred paintings that melted 'the soul into a tender participation of human miseries'.[78] Varma's first public showing of such a tender episode was a perennial favourite: *Śakuntalā's Love Epistle to Duśyanta* (Fig. 138).

This sentimentality went hand in hand with a new image of voluptuous women, a blend of Kerala and Guercino. Varma's outlook was different from the typology of romantic love in Rajput miniatures, where emotions were treated as literary conceits according to the moods they expressed. Varma's Śakuntalā was a pretty young Kerala girl lying on the ground, writing a love letter – a concrete situation as opposed to the generalised emotion of traditional painting. This lent a new conviction to the epic scenes to which the beholder could readily relate. Yet the paradox inherent in a contemporary scene in the guise of the past reminds us of the quip about the Victorian Alma-Tadema: whatever he painted, it was always four o'clock tea at the thermal springs. Convinced of the universality of his Victorian work, Varma did not see the need to turn to an Indian painting style. This 'Victorian-ness' was reinforced by his captions that quoted from English classics, such as from Byron for *Arjuna and Subhadrā* (Fig. 123). The 'universalism' was not necessarily alien to Indian sensibility, for both traditions favoured melodrama and sentimentality. Not only did the Duke of Buckingham acquire *Śakuntalā*, but the great demand for the picture led to several versions by Varma. Monier Williams used one for his translation of the Sanskrit play.[79]

Fourteen paintings for the Gaekwad of Baroda

Varma's *Sītā Pātāla Praveśa*, a key painting in his evolution as a historicist painter, was on a lofty theme, the Hindu ideal of the *satī*, the self-effacing wife, steadfast in her chastity. In 1875, Tanjore Madhava Rao had moved from Trivandrum to Baroda, where his Dewanship achieved even more outstanding successes. Though ousted from the post in 1882 by his English rival, Rao continued to enjoy the young Gaekwad's confidence; he took



123 Ravi Varma: *Arjuna and Subhadrā*, oil. Later nationalists considered its depiction of affection too immodest to be a cultural ideal

the painting of Sītā to Baroda and probably arranged the meeting between the Gaekwad and Varma. This meeting in the Niligiri Hills led to Varma's epic paintings for Baroda, a state where his major portraits were executed.[80]

Another factor gave an added impetus to Varma's narrative cycle. As the century drew to a close, nationalist passions were rising among the western-educated. When Varma had begun his career, regional consciousness was the order of the day; he did not need to see beyond Kerala. But India was changing rapidly. Railways, telegraphs and printing technology brought the regions together as never before. The Indian Congress met in 1885 and claimed to speak for all India, ignoring regional differences. In Varma's case, journalism had been instrumental in spreading his reputation. In time the wide travels of the brothers took them to the main cultural centres in India. Varma met the Congress leaders, Surendranath Banerjea, Gokhale and Annie Besant, and visited the Tagores. For the Chicago exhibition he chose to highlight the rich cultural diversities in India.[81]

With the Gaekwad's commission, Varma's Keralan identity flowed into a pan-Indian one, a sentiment endorsed by his patron. When Varma failed to find an authentic dress for his ancient heroine, he did not hesitate to drape her in a sari as the appropriate national costume. After 1896, in response to the upsurge of nationalism in Maharastra, the Ravi Varma Press put out oleographs of national heroes, Shivaji, Tilak and Ranade. A nationalist author in Bombay engaged the artist to paint a picture of Shivaji's coronation.[82] The intelligentsia in their turn, and the journalist Ramananda Chatterjee in particular, acknowledged Varma's value to national unity. The Keralan master was offered the considerable sum of Rs 50,000 by Baroda, an indication of the importance of the project. Clearly success here was vital; in addition to his brother, he enlisted the services of their sister, Mangalabai. A paid assistant, Madhav Wadhiar, helped with the costumes.[83]

The fourteen paintings combined melodrama with moral lessons in the manner of European history painters who, taking their cue from rhetoric, saw painting as 'embellishing, and impressing truths'.[84] Varma's typology of feeling, based on the polarity of noble and base sentiments, supplemented rather than supplanted Indian conventions: noble love contrasted with base lust; self-sacrifice with self-destructive obsession; Nala's decline through gambling and his desertion of Damayantī; the love of Arjuna and Subhadrā; the fall of the sage Viśvāmitra through lust; the infatuation of Sāntanu with Gaṅgā, and so on. These popular stories, depicted with such fidelity, dazzled the ordinary people in Trivandrum, Bombay and Baroda. Brahmin women, mentions Raja Varma, visited their studio in Bombay simply in order to gaze in wonder at these canvases.[85]

The grammar of Ravi Varma's historicist works

Aristocratic taste graduated from portraits to history painting almost entirely through Ravi Varma's efforts. Following Baroda's lead, the states of Mysore and Trivandrum commissioned large-scale mythological works. The painter devised his own complex iconographic programme of literary inspiration by studying the Royal Academy Annuals, adapting a landscape here, modifying an architectural interior there, as backdrops to his epic characters, much in the fashion of Victorian high art. Vast canvases on grand themes, *nobles et sentimentales*, were the rage in Paris, London and Vienna.[86]

Were Varma's works based on figure drawing, the *sine qua non* of European art in the last century? It is doubtful if the Varmas ever had the chance to practise it. Even in Indian art schools, figure drawing was not introduced in earnest until the 1920s. Ravi Varma owned a life-size 'articulated figure', which enabled him to check the proportions and fix the poses. But nude models, we know, were difficult to recruit; attempts to hire a draped model in Hyderabad had ended in a fiasco. Raja discusses the general topic of figure drawing and his unconventional method of studying the human form:

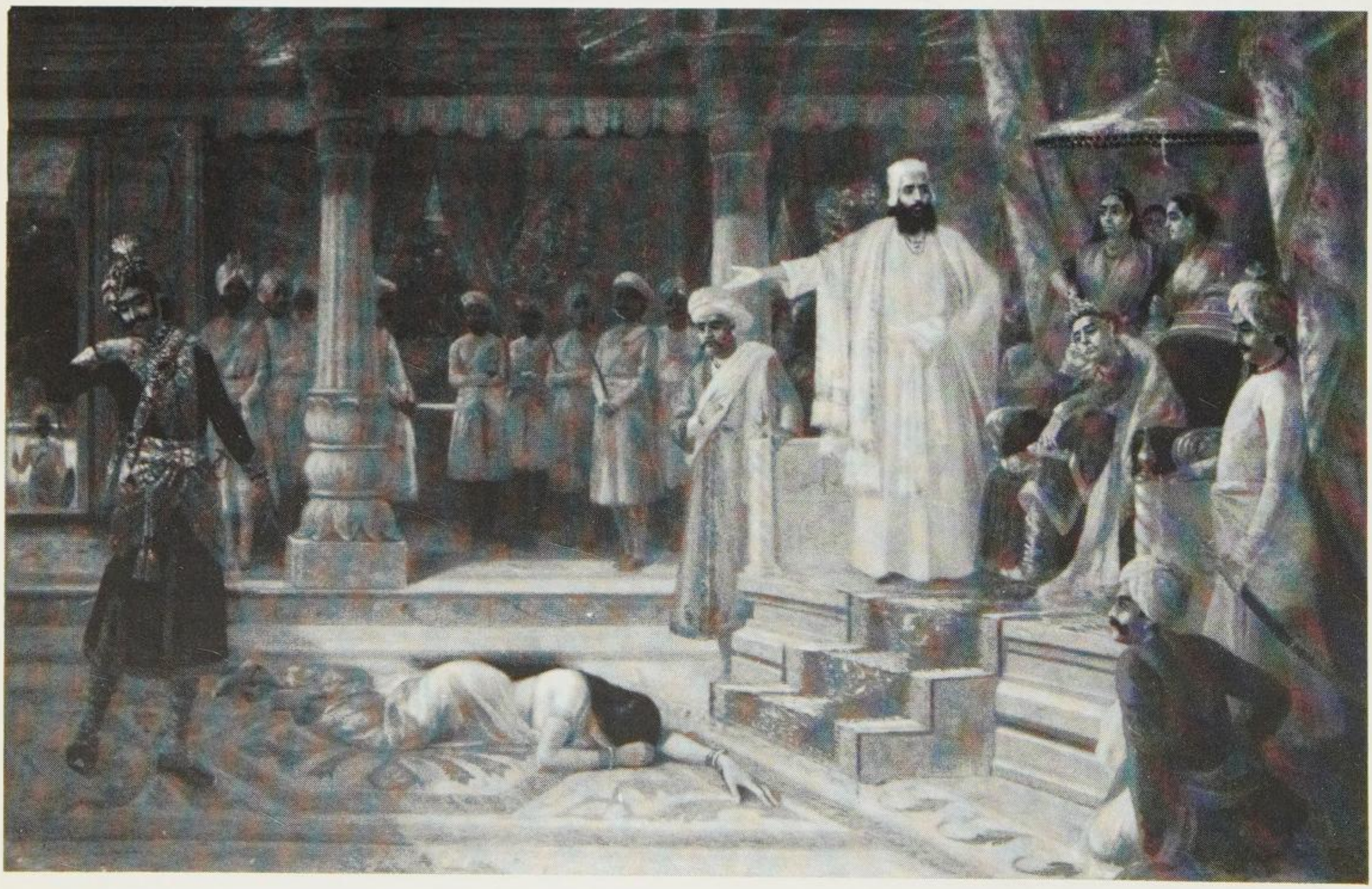
> The row on the lake [Pichola] of a morning is interesting to an artist; the ghats or beautiful stone steps are filled with bathers of both sexes. The women who walk along the streets are so closely veiled, [yet they show] themselves almost naked and indulge in bathing or washing without any sign of modesty.[87]

Of course, both brothers depicted semi-nude figures, but Ravi's partially-draped figures were not always convincing. Unlike his sure grasp of a draped model, the drawing of women's breasts shows weakness, as in the *Matsyagandhā* (Mysore). In the Baroda *Matsyagandhā* or in prints such as *Tilottamā* or *Paminī*, European Classical figures were adapted for the purpose. Varma's inexperience is surprising in view of the fact that even in Ravi Varma's time in Kerala, respectable Nair women appeared in public with uncovered breasts.[88]

How were these paintings planned by Varma? *The Triumph of Indrajit* (Fig. XIX), to take a typical example, is an amalgam of indigenous and western elements: the rhetorical postures, the hyperbolic gestures, notably the enlarged pupils of the eyes, are none other than the mimetic conventions of the Kathakali dance-drama of Kerala.[89] Varma signals social hierarchy in his narrative by skin colour: the aristocratic protagonists are lighter, while the menials are various shades of black. The exceptions are demon kings, who, in the epic tradition, are non-Aryan aborigines. Of course, Sanskrit literature sanctions the depiction of lower orders as dark-skinned. But was Varma also inspired by European

Orientalists, whose paintings thrived on similar contrasts?[90] Social differences are even more pronounced in Varma's women, which suggests the encroaching new mores of Victorian evangelism. The aristocratic heroine is not only modestly covered in a sari but wears a blouse as well. In contrast, maidservants and aboriginal women are in various states of nudity. The attendants in these works, unlike the main actors, who hold the centre stage, are the silent chorus to the melodrama unfolding before them; they are the liveried retainers of the princely states.[91]

While Varma adopted nineteenth-century historicism, the cultural specificity of his paintings is equally significant. He chose the grammar of the salon, but the gloss he put on it was recognisably Indian. This 'pictorial' language gave him the power to represent a colonial experience: life in the princely courts as he knew it; past history imagined as present melodrama. Varma's elaborate interiors reproduced endlessly the pomp and circumstance of the courts of Trivandrum, Baroda, Mysore and others. *The Court of Virāṭa* (Fig. 124) is a successful work in this genre. The setting for the conflict between royal duty and fatherly love is a grand court held in a large pillared hall. It recalls Edwin Long, one of the highest-paid British painters, similarly engaged in recapturing the grandeur of past royal courts, exotic or otherwise.[92] Sometimes Varma was



124 Ravi Varma: *The Court of Virāṭa*, oil in the manner of Edwin Long, the olympian

tempted to reproduce actual details of European paintings. In *The Triumph of Indrajit* (1903), the guard on the top right-hand corner reminds us of Ludwig Deutsch's *The Nubian Guard* (1895). The Orientalist connection is reinforced by the *deshabillée* Indrānī, the Indian Juno, who is being molested by a black menial, recalling the voyeuristic paintings of exotic slave markets.[93]

Varma's images of the past are *tableaux vivants* in which great human dramas unfold; as such they betray the influence of the Parsi theatre in Bombay. The brothers were avid theatregoers, enjoying both English and indigenous productions. One of their admirers was the visiting American actor, Edmund Russell, who often invited them to the theatre. It was this influence of the stage that lent an air of fancy-dress parade to Varma's canvases. But then the pictorial language of salon art was anything but natural. We know that Victorian painters were similarly associated with the theatre.[94]

AN ARTIST OF THE PEOPLE

The search for an art-loving public

By the end of the century, Ravi Varma had become a cult figure among the educated, with followers such as Sri Ram of Lahore (1876–1926), closely imitating his style.[95] Although he made an effective use of modern publicity, he was not yet totally satisfied. He had started as a court painter of Travancore; after 1873 he was able to join the Indian exhibition circuit. But this still did not free him from the Maharaja's control. Unlike earlier court artists, such patronage irked Varma, and he was determined to gain his independence. Varma's ambitions fitted in perfectly with the growth of public opinion in India. If the princely courts still enjoyed financial clout, the press gave a wide exposure to the artist's work. Above all, Varma's biography by his champion, Ramananda Chatterjee, introduced him to the English-educated.[96]

However, as opposed to a permanent gallery, the impact of seasonal exhibitions was ephemeral. Varma spoke of European museums with wistful admiration; he must have known of the art gallery in Calcutta. In 1885, Varma first mooted the idea of a public gallery in Trivandrum, his home state, for displaying his art. But the Maharaja had other priorities before him. Not wishing to offend Varma, he temporised by offering the artist a commission of two narrative paintings per year. This did not satisfy Varma.[97]

Though Varma failed in Travancore, an opportunity arose with the Baroda commission. He gave publicity to the project by inviting prominent critics to view the preliminary sketches. The exhibition of the works in Trivandrum, before being sent to Baroda, was the first of its

kind in the region. An informal count was taken of the attendance numbers, although disappointingly this was not recorded. En route to Baroda, the works were shown in Bombay. At the artist's request, the Laxmi Vilas Palace in Baroda was thrown open for their public viewing.[98]

The Madras government had its own scheme that worked in Varma's favour; it was sympathetic to the proposal for a salon-art section in the state museum made by Edgar Thurston, its director. Thurston, also the Secretary to the Fine Arts Society and a friend of the Varmas, interested them in the idea, pointing out that their works would be a major attraction there. On 29 September 1902, Raja visited the museum, where he saw his and his brother's works prominently displayed. Ravi Varma had a further success in Mysore. In 1903, a new palace was planned and the artists' agent secured a commission for decorating the main hall with *Purāṇic* paintings. The brothers were invited to inspect the building-in-progress before deciding on the subjects. In July 1904, a portrait commission from the young Maharaja took them to Mysore, when they settled the details of the ambitious project.[99]

Ravi Varma and popular prints

Varma's grasp of the modern means of publicity led him to take the final step to secure his national reputation. By common consent, his enormous popularity rests on the cheap prints of his mythological paintings. Varma had been preceded in printmaking by the Calcutta Art Studio, not to mention a host of other anonymous presses. But in his case, mechanical reproduction was used in India for the first time to popularise a leading artist (Figs 125, 126). The process had begun in the West in the late eighteenth century, when famous paintings were turned into prints to bring them within the reach of the ordinary people.[100] From the outset, Varma, as with other colonial artists, was aware of the potential of modern reproductive devices. He employed photographs and *cartes-de-visite* as a preliminary to his portraits and possibly to mythological canvases. The latter certainly owed a lot to reproductions of European art in magazines.[101]

The idea of oleographs may have emanated from Tanjore Madhava Rao in 1884:

> many of my friends . . . are desirous of possessing your works. It would be hardly possible for you, with only a pair of hands, to meet such a large demand. Send, therefore, a few of your select works to Europe and have them oleographed. You will thereby not only extend your reputation, but will be doing a real service to the country.[102]

The advice was not taken up until after Rao's death in 1892. When Varma entered the market he had to contend with the existing presses, and

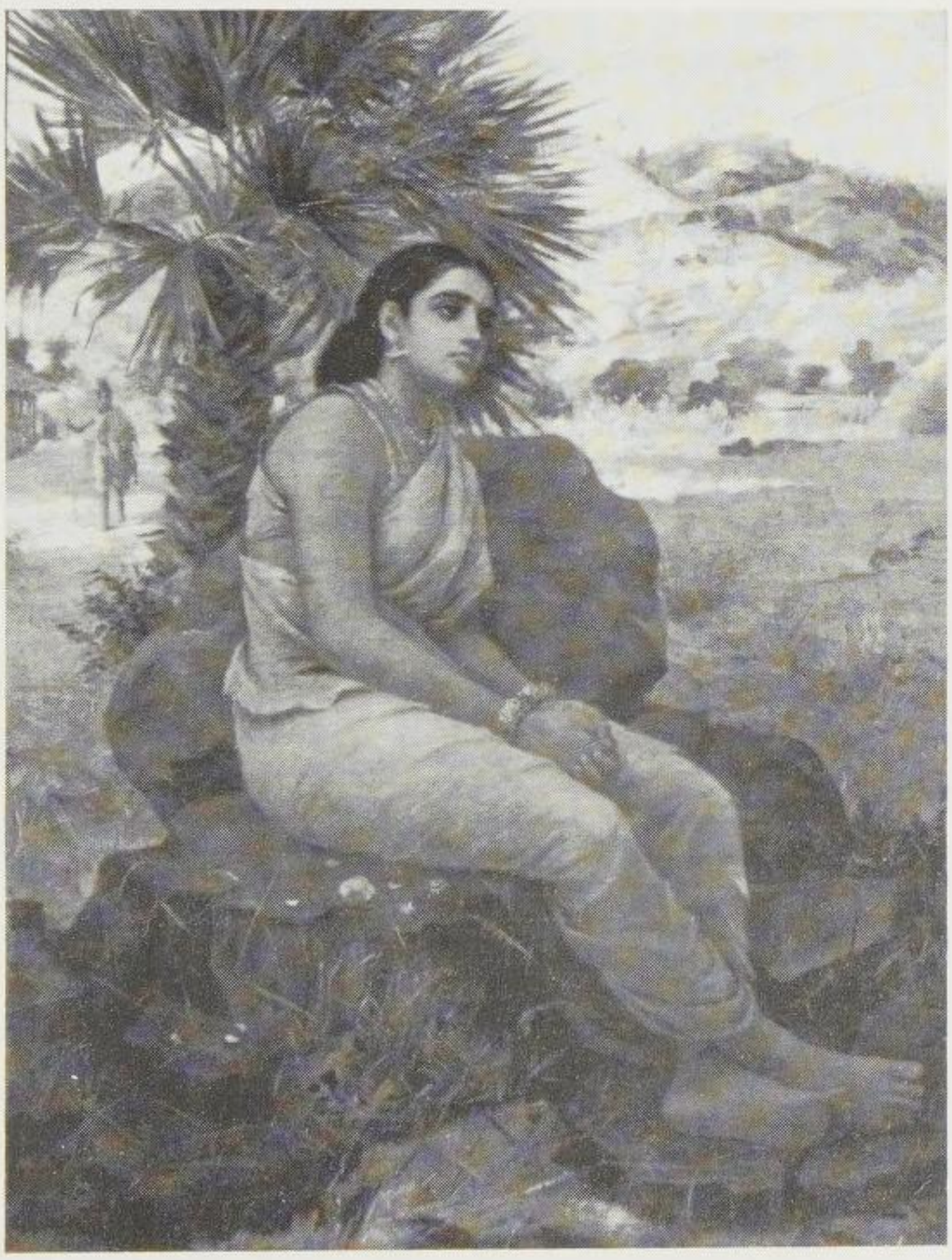
especially with the virtual monopoly enjoyed by the Poona Chitrashala Press. As his son Rama Varma observed, Bombay was chosen not only because it was easier to import machinery, but also because 'people had to be weaned from the Poona pictures'.[103]

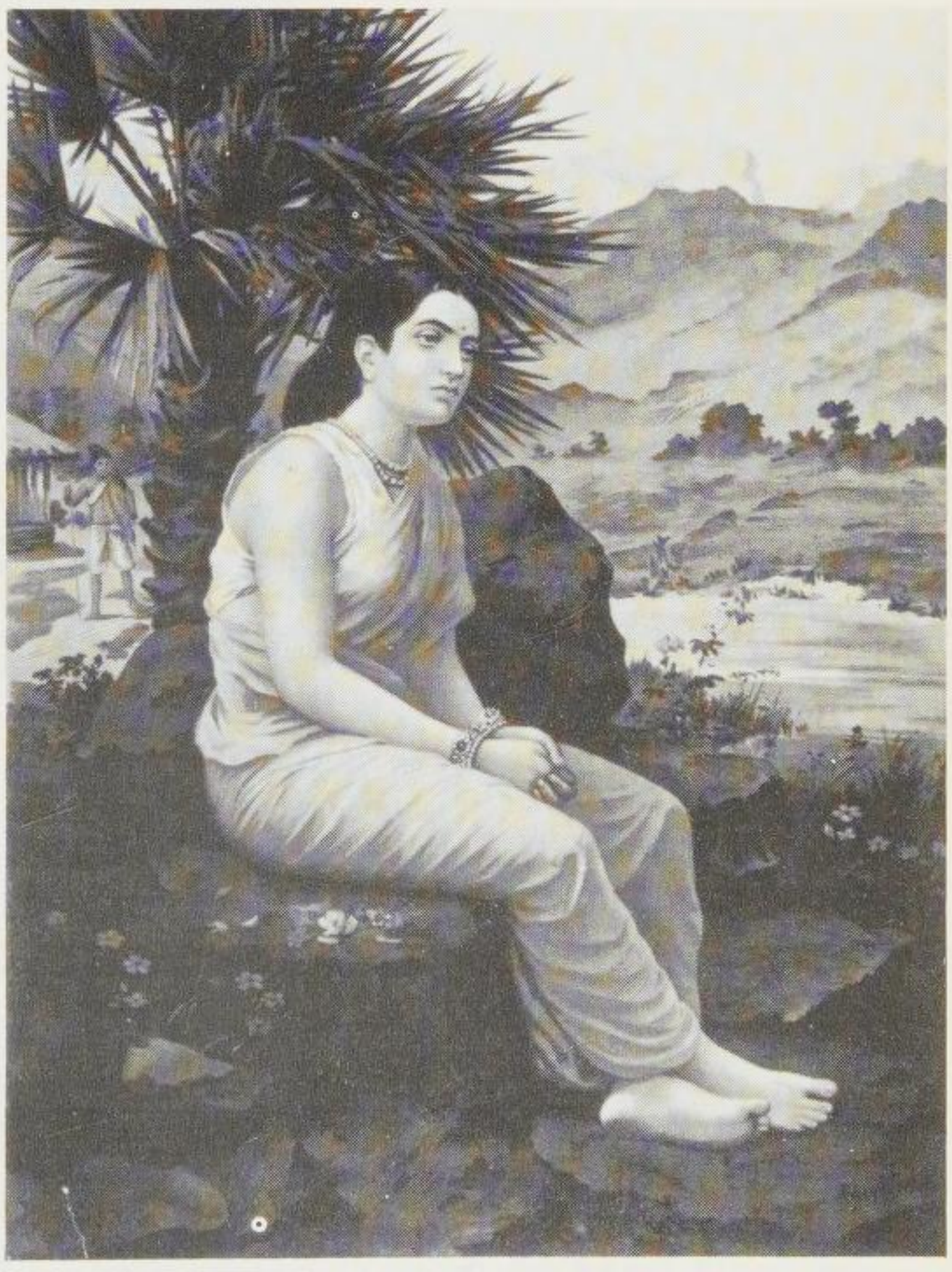
There was another, less obvious, reason why the brothers decided to take up oleography. German prints of erotic subjects had a wide circulation at the end of the century. In 1895, Ravi and Raja closely followed the prosecution in Bombay of a seller of German oleographs. The judges, John Jardine and Mahadev Govind Ranade, gave their verdict that 'naked pictures of classical subjects were not obscene, in that the artists had higher ideals than those of merely exciting the sensual appetites of the spectators. The pictures in question might have been classed among them, had it not been for the introduction into them of modern silk umbrellas and apparel that divested them of their idealism'.[104] With their own oleographs, the Varmas resolved to elevate public taste by injecting the idealism they felt to be lacking in the bazaar works. They did not avoid erotic subjects. But apart from one print doubtfully attributed to them, they restricted themselves to coy eroticism, with the figure tantalisingly revealed by the semi-transparent sari.[105]

Varma took up oleographs when the printmakers were struggling to

125 *Left* Ravi Varma: *Śakuntalā*, oil

126 Ravi Varma: *Śakuntalā*, oleograph





keep their heads above water in combat with photography, with one another and with foreign competition. How did he succeed in a period of ruthless competition? Even today his name is synonymous with cheap prints in India. An analysis of his success by Balendranath Tagore, is highly suggestive. The Bengali critic, who bore witness to shifts in taste, contrasted Varma's strength with the limitations of the Calcutta Art Studio. The latter's prints failed to arouse aesthetic feelings in their distortions of ancient Sanskrit ideals. They were artistically inept in their use of 'a sickly yellow to depict the saint Chaitanya, an over-enthusiastic application of the blue pencil to capture Kṛṣṇa's skin, and a liberal amount of tar to represent the goddess Kālī'.[106]

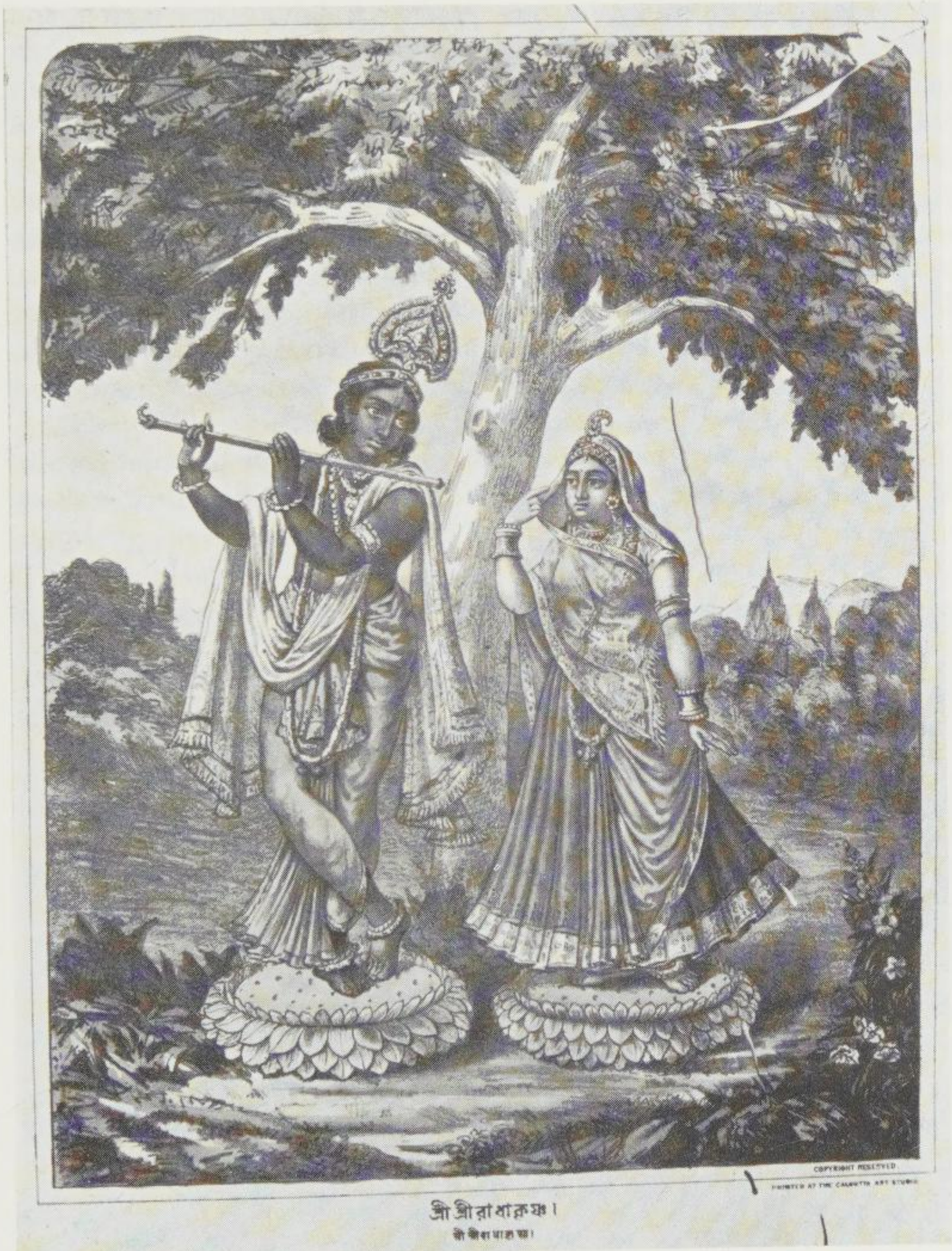
In accusing the Studio of taking Sanskrit metaphors literally, Balen was in fact proposing a radical mutation of Hindu iconography in the light of the new colonial canon. His interpretation of the term *bhāva* ('feeling and expression') should be seen against this aesthetics of feeling. Deliberately ignoring the convention that Kṛṣṇa should be 'blue skinned' (Fig. 127), he accused the 'semi-literate iconographers of misleading the artists. In short, by the standards of western naturalism, the Studio prints were deficient in anatomy and colour harmony, and were stilted in expression to boot. The *Kālī* was an ugly, expressionless effigy that only irritated rather than evoking feelings of religious awe.[107]

Varma was infinitely preferable to the Calcutta Art Studio. The *Purāṇas* had never before been painted so appealingly. The quality Balendranath found in abundance in the artist was *bhāva*, interpreted by him as the naturalist treatment of inner feelings and emotions, rather than literal translations of the superhuman attributes of Hindu gods. He took *Sītā Pātāla Praveśa* to be a moving example of *bhāva*. Balendranath's concept gives us an insight into Varma's art which had introduced the whole spectrum of human emotions – grand tragedy, misery, fear, surprise, pathos, remorse, sadness, pain and pleasure.[108]

Printmakers before Varma had modified Hindu iconography in the light of western ideas. For instance, they placed the deities in familiar, nineteenth-century Bengali settings and sometimes dispensed with their multiple arms. But in substance the iconographic conventions remained intact. The Studio anticipated Varma in the choice of literary themes, notably *Nala and Damayantī* (Fig. 128). But in this naturalistic lithograph, the sleeping Damayantī is an awkward version of a Classical nude, who has been hastily and somewhat clumsily covered in a sari, while the female companions of the heroine in *The Rescue of Sītā* display shapely muscular legs that could scarely be Indian. The weakness of these prints is that the 'quotations' are never convincingly integrated into the composition.[109]

Ravi Varma shrewdly and confidently fused European and Indian elements. Many of his oleographs were faithful versions of his paintings. As such, they were far more accomplished than the popular prints of

Bengal, because of his better grasp of the underlying principles of naturalism. The compositions were elaborate, the grammar more sophisticated. He did not generally need to lift figures from European sources, for he tended to use them from life. Even Annada Bagchi of the Calcutta Art Studio could not match Varma's psychological approach to mythology. Although it was Varma who created a new naturalist iconography for Hindu gods, in response to public demand, his oleographs occasionally reverted to conventional iconography.[110]

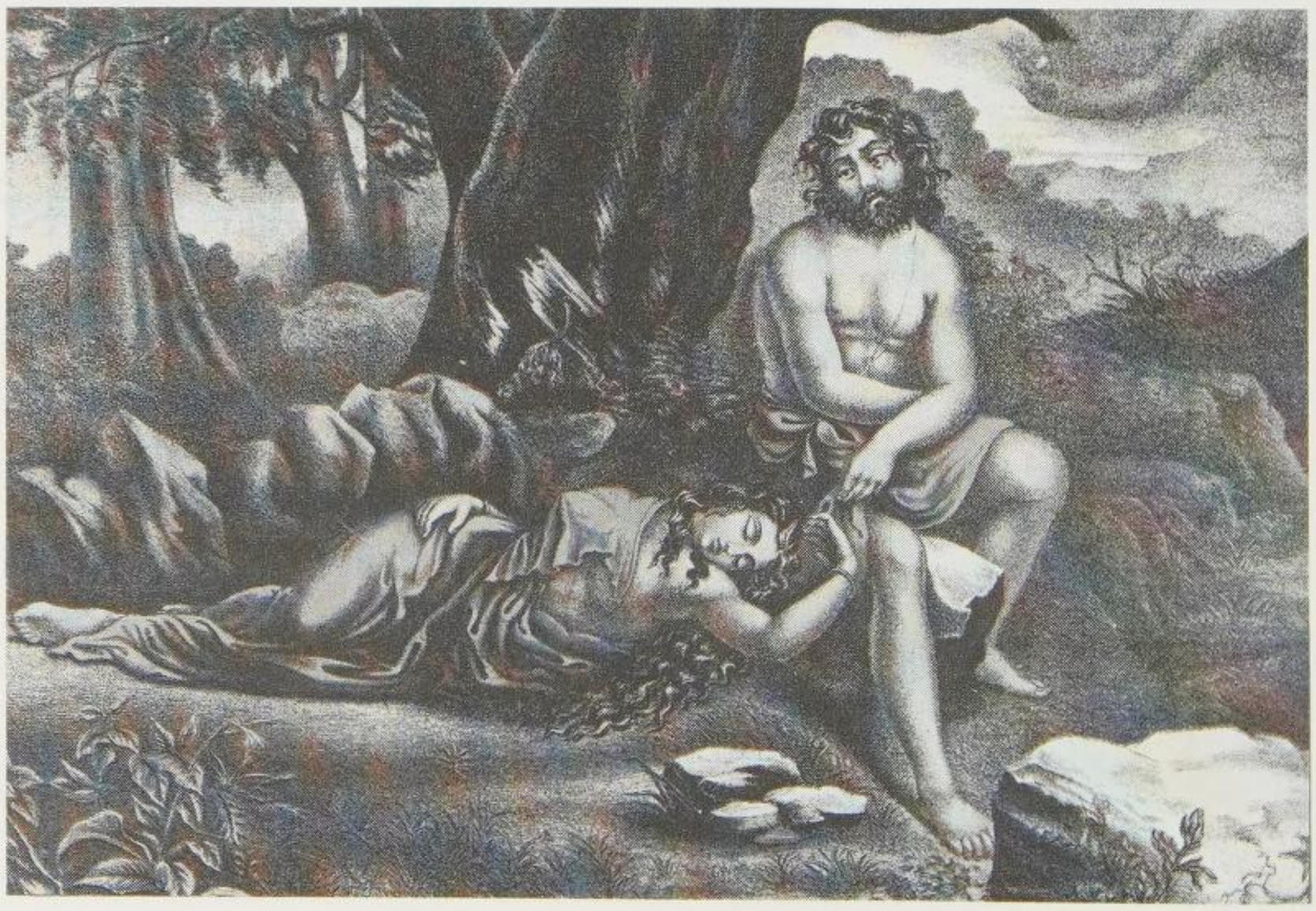


127 Calcutta Art Studio: *Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa*, lithograph

The Ravi Varma Fine Art Lithographic Press

Unlike Bamapada Bandopadhaya, it is almost certain that Varma himself never sent his works to be printed abroad.[111] The remuneration for the Baroda cycle paved the way for a press, while the rest of the money was advanced by a business partner, Makhanji. A site at Girgaum near Bombay was chosen for the Ravi Varma Fine Art Lithographic Press, which opened in 1894. Machinery for the steam press was imported from Germany; two German artists, Fritz Schleicher and B. Gerhardt, were engaged to help transfer Varma's drawings to stone. The brothers published numerous subjects: copies of their own paintings, their renderings of conventional icons, literary and historical figures and nationalist leaders. The press also printed Maratha primers for children and Raja wrote to the education department in Madras, offering to publish primers in Tamil and Malayalam.[112] In 1899 they supplied a local firm with Christmas cards and postcards. Later, playing cards were produced. In 1897, Raja purchased, from Ananta Shivaji Desai, a picture merchant of Bombay, popular German prints in order to discover the secret of their success. Soon Desai and A. K. Joshi were recruited as agents. The brothers' relationship with Joshi and Desai was close; Joshi even found them accommodation in Bombay. After Ravi Varma's death, Desai obtained permission to print his works from the Mysore and Baroda collections.[113]

'We were not a little pleased to see all of our oleographs exposed for sale [in a local shop]. They are popular', wrote Raja during their visit to



128 Calcutta Art Studio: *Nala and Damayantī*, lithograph

Visakhapatnam in 1902.[114] Whilst the Varmas witnessed the growing popularity of their prints, why did they fail to benefit financially from them? An ambitious commercial venture, the press involved a great deal of organisation that was beyond their ability. This was made worse by their tight professional schedule which prevented them from giving wholehearted attention to it. They were often absent from Bombay for long periods. Early indications are of financial mismanagement and corruption among the employees.[115]

The unsettled conditions of the late 1890s in Bombay with the outbreak of the plague made labour recruitment difficult. The situation worsened with the harsh anti-plague measures and the ensuing civil unrest led by Tilak. At this critical juncture the death of their uncle Raja Varma forced the brothers to leave Bombay for two years. On their return, Makhanji decided to terminate the partnership, demanding the money lent by him. In 1899, a large stock of pictures was sold off to Joshi for a modest sum of Rs 22,000, as the press faced mounting debts. In 1901 it was moved to a new site in Lonavla near Poona. Meanwhile the plague intensified in Bombay. So when Schleicher made an offer for the press, an agreement was reached on 20 July 1901. As Raja confessed: 'considering the difficulties of properly managing the firm and losses the plague is inflicting year by year, there is no other alternative left. We are now at least free from anxieties'.[116] Around 1901–2, the change was noticed in the markedly European figures of the prints, now designed by the two Germans, though still under the Ravi Varma imprimatur. Visiting the press on 12 October 1903, Raja noticed that Schleicher was trying to print the oleographs cheaply to oust the German prints from the Indian market. The formal handover took place on Saturday 7 November 1903. Raja records:

> Today we have severed all connection with our press . . . selling it to Mr Schleicher for a consideration of Rs 25,000 over and above paying all the debts connected with the establishment amounting to Rs 5 or 6 thousand . . .[117]

The financial failure of the Varmas demonstrates the hazards of the new technology. If the advantages of mass reproduction were great, so were its drawbacks. As Walter Benjamin put it succinctly, the capacity of the new processes to reproduce endlessly threatened the aura of originality associated with a work of art. In the cut-throat world of popular prints, especially when the prize was a vast all-India market, piracy was inevitable. Attempts by firms to capture the market by any available means are suggested by their use of multilingual legends on the prints. Initially, the Poona Press provided only *devanāgarī* captions for the local clients, but soon English was added with an eye to the expanding market. Not to be caught out, The Calcutta Art Studio furnished legends in Bengali, *devanāgarī* and English.[118]

Plagiarism was the most serious threat to Varma, undermining the uniqueness of his prints from the moment they appeared. So worried was the artist that he asked Gokhale to pass a bill at the Central Legislative Council against it.[119] It was useless. Similar problems were faced by the Calcutta Art Studio, whose chromo-lithographs warned against the infringement of copyright; yet another press found little difficulty in plagiarising its Kālī. The Studio's profits fell when its lithographs were printed in Britain and sold at one tenth of the original price. The Poona

129 Ravi Varma: *The Death of Jatāyu*, oil

Chitrashala Press took to numbering its oleographs to prevent plagiarism. But the press was guilty of the same practice, if one is correct in identifying the oleograph, *Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs*, as belonging to the Ravi Varma Press. In short, the law proved to be powerless in this matter, which makes the task of identifying genuine Ravi Varma oleographs difficult.[120]

While the Varmas failed to make the press a profitable concern, their prints continued to grow in popularity. Postcards of their most famous prints started arriving in India from Saxony, which, along with Dhurandhar's, became a familiar aspect of colonial India. The oleographs featured regularly in advertisements; *The Death of Jaṭāyu* (Fig. 129) sold safety matches (Fig. 130); a famous English baby food used *The Birth of Śakuntalā*: while the sage Viśvāmitra is horrified by the consequences of a momentary indiscretion, the manufacturers shrewdly slip their nutritious baby product into the picture (Figs XX, 131). The popularity of the print reminds us of Landseer's *Monarch of the Glen*, used for a brand of whisky.[121]

No less interesting were the German porcelain figures for the Indian market, based on Ravi Varma, three of which are now in the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay. The first, that of Śiva, was a free rendering of the oleograph, *Viśvāmitra and Menakā*. That print in its turn was based on the painting at Baroda. The second piece, *Dattatreya*, was inspired by an independent oleograph put out by the press. The third porcelain featured Varma's famous *Sarasvatī* (Figs 132, 133). The porcelain pieces testify to a long-standing import trade in Hindu deities from different parts of the world. German porcelain complemented Japanese ivory images of Hindu gods, the latter often sporting a garbled iconography and Samurai features. Even earlier to arrive were Chinese glass paintings on Indian themes. These objects, exported by China in the eighteenth century, became so popular that they were soon manufactured in India.[122]

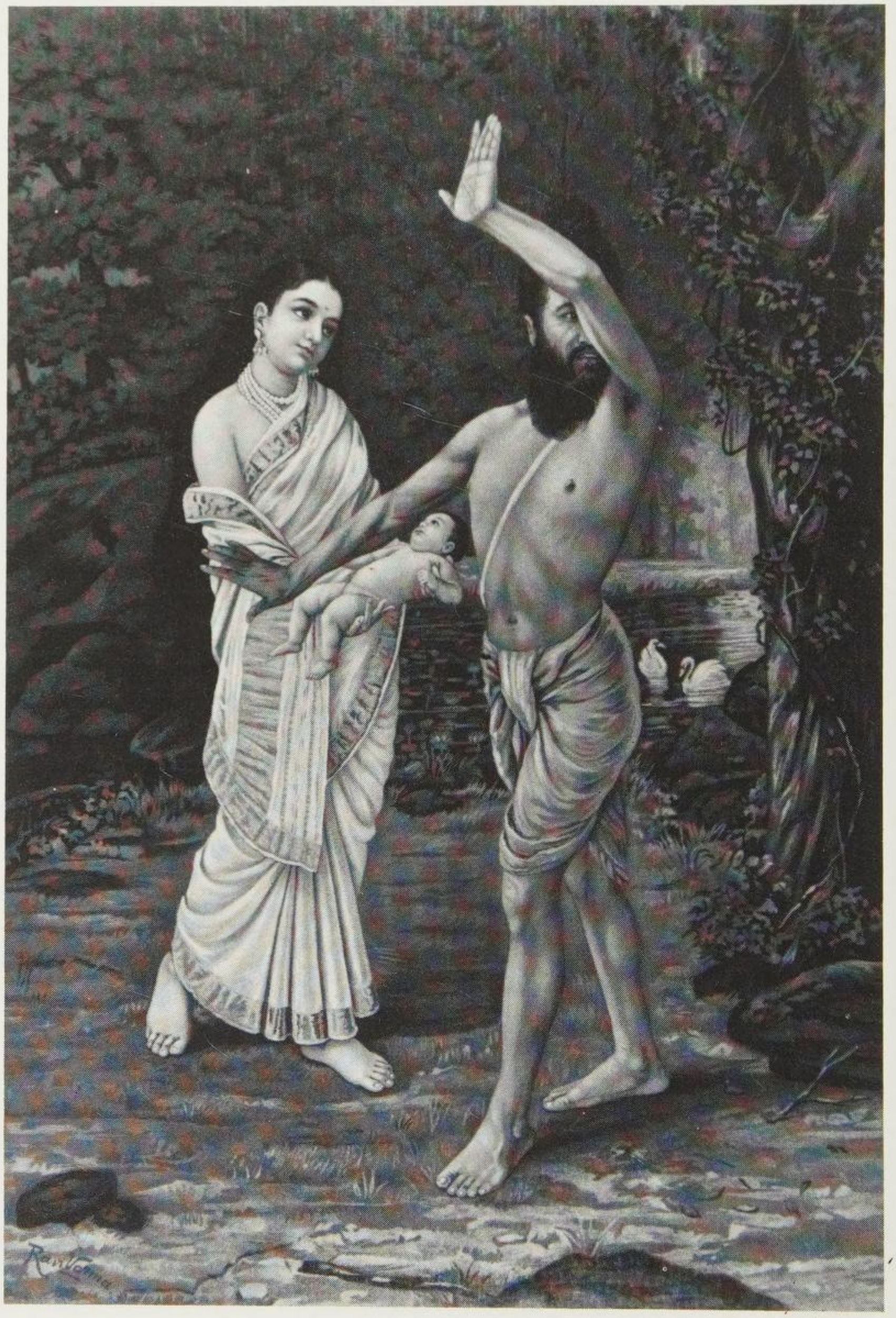
THE END OF AN ERA

By the end of his life, Ravi Varma had attained his goals as a national hero. Tacitly accepted as the painter to the Raj, he was the only artist to receive the ultimate imperial accolade, Kaiser-i-Hind. At the same time, Varma was fêted by the Congress as the painter who helped in nation-building. In 1903 the brothers were invited to judge the fine arts section of the Industrial Exhibition of the Congress in Madras.[123]

During Ravi Varma's lifetime patriotism and loyalty to the Empire had not yet become irreconcilable categories. Raja noted the subdued atmosphere in Bombay at Queen Victoria's death, a token of the affection in which 'the great white mother' was held in India.[124] When Curzon envisaged a national gallery of notable men as befitting the deceased Queen, he naturally thought of Varma. In April 1901, Varma wrote to

130 Ravi Varma: *The Death of Jatāyu*, print

Curzon from Udaipur, offering two portraits and two historical subjects, as well as a donation to the Imperial Fund. 'I shall spare no pains to collect authentic information [for the four paintings]. I came here a few days ago to make sketches and studies of local scenery, ancient arms and accoutrements', he added. The project never materialised, for the Varmas soon



131 Ravi Varma: *Birth of Śakuntalā*, oleograph (compare with colour Fig. XX)

died and Curzon left India in disgrace after the Partition of Bengal. Only one of the portraits for the gallery, that of Tanjore Madhava Rao, is in the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta. Late in 1904, on a visit to Mysore, Raja became seriously ill with an abdominal complaint; he died on 4 January 1905. Ravi Varma died on 2 October 1906 aged fifty-eight, two years before his planned retirement in the Hindu fashion. The news of his death was in the evening edition of the *Times of India*. With Ravi Varma ended the optimistic phase of colonial art in India.[125]

Today only the awards, the official commissions and the eulogies of

132 *Left* Ravi Varma: *Sarasvatī*, oleograph. Its use by a cartoonist (Fig. 95) demonstrates the popularity of Varma prints

133 German porcelain inspired by Varma: *Sarasvatī*

Ravi Varma are remembered. Time has effaced the memory of any setbacks he may have suffered, creating an impression of the relentless progress of a genius. Yet even at the height of his career, Varma did not always receive a favourable press.[126] It was not his easy success but his gifts, organisation, and the changing artistic situation in India that took him to the summit of colonial art. Unlike traditional painters, Varma showed a remarkable ability to improve upon received ideas, to grasp a situation clearly and to act upon it swiftly. His lively curiosity is evident with regard to languages, for instance. Varma began to learn English and German late in life after he had mastered Indian languages. In the last year of his life, in the midst of ill health and sadness, he could write to Ramananda asking for a Bengal primer.[127]

Ravi Varma's example created an aura around the profession. He enjoyed a popularity transcending class, language and region that has not been equalled since.[128] The final word about this pioneer westerniser rests with Rabindranath, who spent a whole morning scrutinising his pictures:

> The secret of their appeal is in reminding us how precious our own culture is to us, in restoring to us our inheritance. Our mind here acts as an ally of the artist. We can almost anticipate what he is about to say . . . It is all too easy to find fault with him. But we must remember that it is a lot easier to imagine a subject than to paint it. A mental image, after all, has the freedom to be imprecise. But if that mental image has to be turned into something as concrete as a picture, with concern for even the minute aspects of representation, then that task ceases to be facile.[129]

PART THREE

THE GREAT WAVE OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM

6 BENGALI PATRIOTS AND ART FOR THE NATION

The art which truly reflects the fictitious culture of Indian universities and the teaching of Anglo-Indian Art Schools is exhibited in the paintings of Ravi Varma . . . It is diffiult to understand whether the popularity [of] his works . . . is to be attributed more to the common realistic trickery which he has borrowed from European painters or to his choice of Indian subjects. But certain it is that his pictures invariably manifest a most painful lack of poetic faculty in illustrating the most imaginative Indian poetry and allegory; and the cardinal sin is not to be atoned for by any kind of skill in technical execution.

Ernest Binfield Havell, 1908

In 1906, the last year of his life, Ravi Varma's reputation as a national figure seemed unassailable. And yet, almost overnight his works fell from grace. In 1907 Ramananda still published a laudatory profile of the master in his *Modern Review*, but that year the magazine carried a virulent attack on him by Nivedita. Stressing the unity of art and the nation, she denounced Varma's paintings as debased art that possessed neither spirituality nor dignity. Nivedita was rapidly followed by Havell and Coomaraswamy and by Varma's feeble defence by a devotee.[1] Varma's very popularity brought his downfall. Like the English painter Edwin Landseer, he came to be associated in the public mind with cheap prints churned out by the thousand. But the main cause of his ignominy lay deeper. His works were declared to be incompatible with the spirit of Indian nationalism. The nascent Hindu political consciousness which had earlier greeted Varma as its hero, now turned against him, almost with ferocity; he became the sacrificial victim of the period's uneasy blend of politics and aesthetics.

It was Ramananda who had led the Bengali bhadralok in idolising Varma during the years of cultural awakening. From the 1860s, intellectual Calcutta resonated with discussions of art and literature. In this charged atmosphere, students of art were deeply stirred by Birdwood's championship of the traditional arts. They turned to the plight of the

latter for the first time in 1867. In this year, an early nationalist, Nabagopal Mitra, organised the national cultural fair, the Hindu Mela. This event, which took place annually thereafter for a while, demonstrated the first awareness of local handicrafts among the bhadralok; its earnest claim was that it would forge Hindu unity by uplifting the Hindu community from its 'fallen' state. The objects actually displayed at the 1868 fair were an extraordinary mélange: upper-class women's needlework, carpets woven by prisoners and traditional craftwork lay mingled with academic paintings by art students. Potters had fashioned an effigy of Queen Victoria; and in addition to Hindu deities, they had produced clay images based on Greek sculpture.[2]

The next year the exhibition – in particular its ladies' section – came under fire for being insufficiently indigenous. 'The fair ought to give a chance to indigenous crafts', demanded a correspondent. 'The artwork[s] contributed by ladies under European influence are neither for everyday use, nor do they benefit society. We who are bearers of an ancient civilisation should not use foreign goods. It would be far better to improve indigenous products. Foreign manufactures can only be tolerated if they are useful or improve taste. Self-reliance is all we may learn from foreigners. Therefore the purpose of the fair should be to revive ancient arts, not merely to improve present ones'. Here was probably the earliest of many clarion calls of this kind. Another reviewer dismissed the Melā as frivolous enough to be 'a European women's fancy fair'. It had failed to consider more lofty matters.[3]

The 1870 Melā contained the first example of ancient Indian art, a black stone image lent by the historian Rajendralala Mitra. Paintings continued to be in the western mode, though artists did turn to Indian literature. The work of an amateur painter, Tinkari Mukherjee, based on Kalidasa, was much praised. In 1872, there was optimism that 'the Melā will be a binding power, endearing the Hindu name to the Aryan people wherever they are scattered throughout India'.[4] There was in general no shortage of nationalist sentiment; what was lacking was a clear definition of 'authentic' Indian art. As Dwijendranath Tagore, Rabindranath's older brother, reminisced in his memoirs:

> When Nabagopal [Mitra] broached the subject of a national fair that would display local handicrafts, I said to him – these products are known to all and sundry. But can you show me a genuine indigenous painting? Whereupon he commissioned a painter to produce one. When I got to the fair I found to my horror a large painting prominently displayed, depicting the people of India in an act of supplication before the figure of Britannia. I remonstrated with him: turn it around, turn it around at once, so that people cannot see it! Is this your indigenous painting and is this the sort of work you show at a national fair?[5]

Nabagopal founded the *National Paper* and the National School, his obsession earning him the sobriquet, 'National Mitra'. Art was then much

discussed by nationalists. At a public meeting in 1870, Dwijendranath challenged the European claim that painting had been primitive in ancient India. He was sensitive to the criticism that linear perspective had been absent: at this time, European critics took linear perspective to be *the* criterion of artistic progress, as architecture was judged by whether it had invented the 'true' arch or not. There was a general tendency to confuse artistic quality with technical advances, a reflection of the dominance of science and technology in Victorian Britain. Scientific thinking had undoubtedly contributed dramatically to the study of art, but it had the effect of placing technological criteria on a pedestal. Judged in this way, Indian art fared rather poorly.[6]

Shyamacharan Srimani, an art graduate who taught art at the National School, outlined the major remains of ancient Indian art for his youthful audience at the above meeting. *Shilpa Pushpānjali*, founded in the same period by Bagchi, made it its duty to acquaint Bengalis with ancient Indian art.[7] In the 1870s, the Tagore family, *primus inter pares* of the aristocratic bhadralok, set the cultural tone with their extensive literary activities. Their circle of friends included Ramananda Chatterjee, Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri and Jagadish Bose, to name the most prominent. Their interest in Indian art coincided with the rise of Ravi Varma and Mhatre. They were elated by Mhatre's achievement. Their journal of literary criticism, *Bhārati*, gave a rapturous reception to Mhatre's sculpture, *To the Temple*: the statue of the young Maharastran woman fired the imagination of Rabindranath, who described it as 'a gracefully upright tuberose in bloom, gently swaying in the wind and spreading its sweet fragrance on a clear night . . .'. Only a true artist, said the poet, was capable of blending all the different parts of the human anatomy in such sculptural unity.[8]

For Ramananda, Mhatre and Varma's triumphs had a different resonance. The journalist had long been searching for an ideal agent to bind the fissiparous languages and cultures of India. Literature had failed the test in this near-Babel. Art, as a universal language in Ramananda's eyes, offered him a unique opportunity. Ideally, literature would have brought about a cultural *rapprochement* between regions. But this was precluded for lack of adequate translations, and so the visual arts must come into their own. They could even reach the unlettered. Mhatre's *To the Temple* embodied the process. It was admired by Indians of different regions – which would have been impossible with a literary work in Marathi:

> Hence, as a factor silently making for national unity, we should welcome a revival of artistic activity, as much as, if not more than, a revival of literary activity.[9]

He went on to observe that in Indian art spring had been heralded by 'the pictures of Raja Ravi Varma. Five years ago they were scarcely known in Northern India'.[10]

A HISTORY OF ART FOR THE HINDU NATION

While the rise of Varma and Mhatre was welcomed by the English-educated, their incipient nationalism still required them to react to the alleged artistic inferiority of Indian art. Shyamacharan Srimani's slim volume, *The Rise of the Fine Arts and the Artistic Skills of the Aryans* (1874), is important less for its own sake than as a marker in the growth of cultural nationalism. Srimani had dedicated the book to his teacher Locke: 'Permit me . . . to inscribe to you this little book . . . [on] the lustre of the Artistic works of our venerable Fore-Fathers, which you cultivate with so much zeal and pleasure'.[11] The Englishman had entrusted Srimani's generation with the aesthetic education of the Bengali public; he deplored the minor part assigned to the visual arts by bhadralok society, as opposed to the place given to literature and music. Acknowledging the dedication, Locke observed that even though Srimani had neither the leisure nor the qualifications to examine ancient Indian art in depth, 'the very fact that you have attempted to engage the attention of . . . your countryman to whom the vernacular is the only vehicle of knowledge . . . [and] to teach . . . the admirable Art of your fore-fathers should to my mind secure for you the very hearty commendation of all those who are interested in the spread of Art-knowledge in India . . .'.[12] How ironic, in a period full of unintended ironies, that the appreciation of Indian art by the Indian elite was kindled by European teachers. The seminal work on Ajanta was written by Griffiths; Locke, who regarded 'scientific' western art as a step in the direction of artistic progress, nonetheless firmly encouraged his students to examine Indian antiquities. (He was responsible for Srimani's appointment as a teacher at the art school.)[13]

Srimani's book, the first history of art written in Bengali, was an early nationalist work. Its structure, including an obligatory discourse on the origins of art, followed the histories of world art by Lübke and others. While on primitive images, Srimani was tempted to compare a Peruvian idol with the goddess Kālī, illustrated by Edward Moor. His aim, however, was to reveal India as the home of the fine arts, not decorative arts. Decoration, after all, was practised by all nations, savage and civilised. Srimani made an effective use of Sanskrit sources as well as Rám Ráz's 1843 classic. His own title was designed to throw down the gauntlet before the Victorians who denied the existence of fine arts in India. Unable to discover any architectural remains from the Vedic period, Srimani complained that the Aryans had failed to leave any records. (Today we know that this early phase of Indian history was not noted for its urban structures.) Srimani wished to instil patriotic pride. Examples of Indian art praised by western critics were cited by him: even the Greeks, he averred, had not been able to rival Chidambaram sculptures. Fergusson, the foremost authority on Indian architecture, was quoted as ranking Jain buildings above the work of Wren. Srimani's tone was combative.

An ancient sculpture from Mathura, identified as Silenus, companion of Dionysus, by a British archaeologist, prompted the following quip: 'How astonishing! If all corpulent imbibers were to be identified as Silenuses, how then would you describe the live Silenuses that frequent Lalbazar [a red-light area in Calcutta]?' He offered his own reading based on the *Mahābhārata*.[14]

Assertion is one thing; cogent refutation is quite another. Much as they wished to answer European critics, nationalists were hamstrung by their taste in naturalism and belief in artistic progress. They needed an indigenous alternative to the western artistic canon. But they were unable to cut loose from the Classical notion that perfection lay in the mastery of representation. And so the condescension of European writers and the wounded pride of Indians generated a series of assertions and counter-assertions. Smarting from the western denigration of Hindu gods, Srimani lamented that Indians were not given their due honour. Worse still, he lacked the means to demonstrate the falseness of such assertions. He was forced to concede that Hindu art was deficient in anatomy and composition: searching for a scapegoat, he traced artistic 'backwardness' to foreign (including Muslim) domination.[15]

Srimani's writing showed all the symptoms of that profound ambivalence towards European art developed by later nationalists. Trained in geometrical drawing, Srimani took it to be the foundation of all art. The study of it, he confided, 'gives one the power to delineate, by plans, elevations and sections, the length, breadth and height, or in other words, the magnitude and the shape of any object, whether a house, a machine, a bridge, a boat or a fort'.[16] The legacy of South Kensington was deemed decisive in nation building. But even as academic art remained his cornerstone, Srimani felt obliged to dismiss mimesis as demeaning, except in the case of portraiture. His alternative was rather tame though: a lavish use of the imagination. A second suggestion, that the figures in the paintings be recognisably Indian, was to boost self-reliance. Political leaders were now making similar demands for 'Indianness'. Srimani could not dismiss western Orientalist contributions to the rediscovery of India's past, but he was reassured that much still remained to be accomplished by Indians. The explorations of ancient India by foreign scholars filled him with horror as a Hindu:

> These acts were as profane as removing the garment from the motherland's sacred bosom, a sacrilege to which patriots should not be indifferent . . . Hence, brothers, arise, rescue our mother from her miserable condition.[17]

Here, a reviewer of Srimani's book announced, was 'the first blow struck for artistic nationalism'. According to one, Srimani had rendered a valuable service to the Bengali public, instilling pride in Indian heritage. 'There are those petty Englishmen who call themselves progressive', commented another, 'who constantly wish to improve us and claim that

Indians are not artistic in nature, but rustics who should concentrate on farming. They claim England as the home of great art, so Indians would have to look up to her in artistic matters. Srimani's book will go a long way towards silencing those ignoramuses'.[18]

In fact the man who had the authority to challenge Eurocentric assumptions about ancient Indian art was the historian, Rajendralala Mitra. A founder member of the European-dominated Photographic Society of India (1856), he translated for its journal an article from *La Lumière*. A year later, his spirited defence of the indigo peasants angered the pro-planter faction in the Society. They forced his expulsion for not being 'a gentleman' even though other members defended his right to hold different views.[19] Like most of his Indian contemporaries, Rajendralala was not opposed to the empire as such, but resented rising white arrogance. The Indian elite continued to believe in the empire since there were as many Englishmen prepared to be friends as there were hostile ones. Rajendralala's European admirers included Max Müller, who described him as a *pandit* but a fine scholar, critic and 'completely above the prejudices of his class . . .', and praised his English as 'remarkably clear and simple'.[20] *The Indian Charivari*, frequently given to caricaturing the Bengali 'baboo', published a flattering profile of the scholar, describing him as 'a gentleman of whom his countrymen may well be proud, for he has established the reputation of Bengalis for accurate study and research in many countries, where, without his assistance, the name of a literary Bengali was probably unknown'.[21]

A tendency to ask awkward questions embroiled Rajendralala in a bitter disagreement with James Fergusson. In *Origins of Indian Architecture* (1870), Mitra challenged a commonplace among western scholars, that the Hindus had learned stone architecture from their Greek 'conquerors': a view that Fergusson shared.[22] Archaeological work has since uncovered early Indian stone structures but none of these was known to Fergusson. In the absence of 'hard' data the whole field of ancient Indian architecture was a minefield of scholarly speculation. Mitra objected to Fergusson's confident tone and his use of the emotive phrase, 'learning from conquerors'. Suspecting a slur on the Indian character, Mitra became further convinced of an underlying scholarly bias by the remarks of another English writer, I. Wheeler, who described an ancient Indian city as a place where 'a non-descript population dwelt in an assemblage of huts which was dignified by the name of the city'.[23] Similar low opinions of Hindu civilisation had been expressed by Westmacott and Lübke. In view of all this, Mitra voiced scepticism about the Greek origins of Indian architecture. Fergusson responded in *The Indian Antiquary* in 1871, which was followed by Mitra in his volume, *Bodh Gaya* (1878). After heated exchanges, Fergusson published a rabid personal attack on the Bengali scholar entitled, *Archaeology in India with special Reference to Babu Rajendralala Mitra* (1884) – using the title '*babu*' to evoke a Victorian stereotype.[24]

Fergusson did not refute Mitra's arguments. Indeed, he contended that Bengali deviousness, as demonstrated by Mitra, 'a prominent member of the native community', made him incapable of honest scholarship. Mitra's dishonesty simply proved that Indians could not be treated as equals, he said. Behind this assertion lay the controversial Ilbert Bill. It had unleased passions among the British in India which Fergusson fully endorsed. He continued his character assassination by ridiculing the 'sham' scholarly honours that had been conferred on this 'babu par excellence'. His own titles he must have regarded as well-earned, for he listed them in the same volume. Nothing galled the Englishman more than the fact that Mitra's *Bodh Gayā* had been illustrated by Growse, a compatriot. The behaviour Fergusson took for granted from 'an uneducated man like Rajendralala', he did not expect of 'an educated English gentleman . . . A Master of Arts at Oxford'.[25]

Fergusson was furious perhaps chiefly because Rajandralala had publicised the archaeologist's ignorance of Sanskrit. Moreover he had written that in historical scholarship, when one lacked relevant data, it was infinitely better to acknowledge that fact,

> than to conjure up hypotheses hedged in by *flimsy* pretenses of 'it seems', 'it is probable', 'it is very likely', which, when proceeding from men of high standing and undoubted talent, serve only to shroud the . . . truth in impermeable gloom. Ancient Indian history, from its hazy character, has suffered . . . from hasty generalisations and *ex cathedra* assertions, and we cannot be too careful in guarding it against them.[26]

Apart from the conflict of two personalities, the two men differed as scholars in their respective assessments of literary and archaeological evidence. Fergusson dismissed his adversary's use of literary sources with the following words, 'his ambition to be considered an archaeologist of the European type . . . [led to his] inventing improbable myths to explain the sculpture of the [Buddhist] caves'.[27] But even if he scorned Mitra's judgement, Fergusson nonetheless felt obliged to modify his original contention that Hindus were ignorant of stone architecture: he suggested that they knew the use of stone but did not employ it for higher types of building until Alexander's invasion of India. The irony in this admission was not lost on Mitra who rejoined that sneers were no substitute for cogent argument.

It may come as a surprise that this whole episode went unnoticed in Bengal. That the aristocratic Bengali thinker's writings were confined to English was one reason, that his outspokenness and haughty bearing were more feared than loved by his compatriots was another. Yet, for all his questioning of bias in European scholars, Rajendralala had this to say about Orissan sculpture: it 'would be as idle to compare the works of the Oriya sculptors with the grand and the beautiful of the sacred land of art

[Greece], as to compare the paintings of India with the *chef d'oeuvre* of Raphael'.[28]

As the century drew to a close, the English-educated advanced from Victorian universalism to a more questioning attitude. But they were unable to find a different aesthetic canon. Ought Indian subjects not to be depicted in an academic style at all then? Was Classical naturalism not a universal language? These questions bothered early nationalists, creating a love–hate relationship with western art, and gave rise to many inconsistencies. However much they protested, they felt like Laocoön, unable to escape the vice-like grip of Classicism. One of them was Ordhendra Coomar Gangoly (1881–1975), later a leading idéologue of anti-naturalism. In his childhood, Gangoly wrote, the bhadralok had been saturated in European academic art. Art was synonymous with Classical art, as the *Venus of Melos* was the universal feminine ideal. His brother-in-law, who was well-read in the history of European art, encouraged the boy to cultivate his sensibility. Ordhendra was brought up on such typical Victorian paintings as Poynter's *A Visit to Aesclepius*, Leighton's *The Bath of Psyche* and Cabanel's *The Birth of Venus*. At thirteen, he set himself the exercise of copying one of the most famous historical paintings, *Death of Lord Nelson* by Benjamin West. West specialised in capturing on massive canvases the dying moments of celebrated characters in history. The work consisted of a vast number of figures and Ordhendra laboured at it for three months at the rate of two hours per day. Realising his seriousness, his brother-in-law urged Gangoly's parents to send him to Italy. Above all, he inspired the boy to read Ruskin, the cornerstone of Victorian aesthetics.[29]

VICTORIAN TASTE AND THREE BENGALI THINKERS

To convey a clear picture of this late nineteenth-century milieu, I have chosen three of its leading cultural figures – Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Rabindranath's nephew Balendranath. Their thinking reveals both the naturalistic foundations of colonial art and their acute ambivalence towards it. The powerful impress of mimesis is particularly evident in Vivekananda. The savant had stirred the western imagination with his lively peregrinations, beginning with his Chicago address. The remaining years of his life, after his triumphal return from the West in 1893, he threw himself into feverish social work, lecturing and writing. Among his conversations on many different topics, references to art abound. His grounding in it was the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the English-speaking world's standard reference work. His chance to see western masterpieces at first hand came during his visit to Europe in 1900. The Greek sculptures at the Louvre which gave him much pleasure also

taught him to discern the different phases of ancient Greek history. Open-minded, he showed a rare sensitivity to European music, freely admitting that the appreciation of any art form required education in it. But brought up as he was on Victorian painting, Vivekananda considered artistic perfection to lie in its expression of a literary idea. He found this in an 'exquisite' piece of academic sculpture, *Art Unveiling Nature*, at the Paris Exposition of 1900.[30]

The other Vivekananda was the proud nationalist: far better the traditional artists of Jaipur and even simple Bengali *patuas*, he declared, then Ravi Varma and those like him, who 'make one hide one's face from shame'.[31] A fervent Pan-Asianist, Vivekananda claimed that the very soul of Asia was interwoven with its art, as was evident even in mundane household utensils. Colonialism had destroyed this religious spirit: the architecture of Calcutta was commonplace, for instance, devoid of higher symbolism. In a revision of his earlier pro-western sympathies, 'materialist' Greek art was now contrasted with 'spiritual' Indian art. They were as far apart as the 'souls' of occidental and oriental civilisations: 'Now what glory is there in merely imitating nature? Why not place an actual piece of flesh before the dog?'[32]

Still traces of western naturalism remained. Though he rejected Classical art for India, Vivekananda believed that Hindu preoccupation with the suprasensual had degenerated into 'grotesque' images. Art must be in constant communion with nature. Progress was essential in any tradition: regrettably, Hindu art had remained stagnant (though not Buddhist sculpture, or, to a lesser extent, Mughal architecture). Yet even this aesthetic hesitation he soon overcame with nationalist sentiment. Notwithstanding, he refused to belittle European art, holding merely that it reflected national temperament: naturalism was as much a preserve of Europe as idealism was of India. (His ultimate dream of building a temple to his preceptor Ramakrishna Paramahamsa as a synthesis of East and West expresses his fundamental catholicity.) But the fact was, he said, whether viewed from the East or the West, artistic originality had been in decline since the advent of industrialism. Works in the West were based on living models – they were nothing more than mechanical exercises in the production of photographic likenesses. He admonished a Bengali academic artist, the 'paintings from your art school have got no expression, as it were. It would be well if you try to paint the objects of everyday meditation of the Hindus by giving to them the expression of ancient ideals.'[33] The Swami offered the artist the suggestion that he gave visual form to his poem on the terrible beauty of the goddess Kālī.

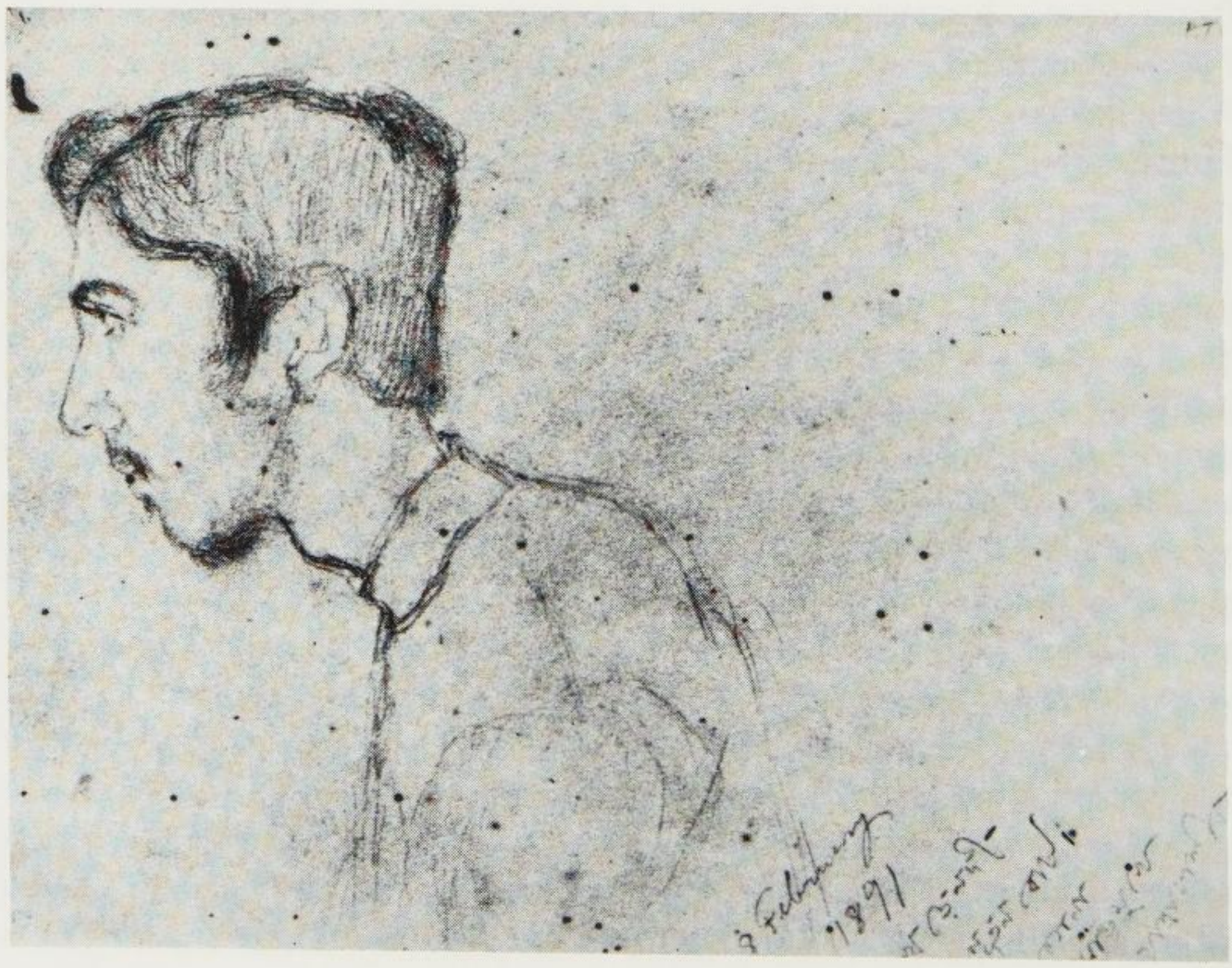
Our second thinker Rabindranath's peculiar importance was not only as a man of letters but also as a mentor of *swadeshi* nationalism. Until this period, his taste was for academic art; his appreciations of Ravi Varma, Mhatre and Jamini Gangooly are on record. Not before the 1920s, when he began painting seriously, did he renounce naturalism. As a young man

visiting Europe in the last century, he openly admired French salon art. When, during the *swadeshi* agitation of 1905, he made a hostile public pronouncement on academic art, his purpose was clearly to question bhadralok cultural dependence on Europe. In *Self Rule* (1905), he rejected western values altogether because of their alien character, albeit temporarily. Speaking of the art teacher Havell's sale of European art belonging to the Calcutta Art Gallery to make way for Indian art, he stated:

> Someone asked me whether it was a wise decision to dispose of these works. I said, yes it was. That is not because western art is not excellent. But for us it is difficult to be skilled in it. How can we ever learn anything of a culture by seeing mostly its inferior works? When one is forced to study a tradition on the basis of imperfect specimens one forgets even one's own tradition.[34]

As a case in point, he cited Indian taste in western furniture, which was divorced from the living European tradition. The poet went so far as to advocate breaking forcibly 'Bengali infatuation with European art fostered by art schools'. Only a firm grounding in one's own heritage enabled one to understand other cultures, he argued, and not inadequate copying of an alien art form.

In Balendranath Tagore (1870–1899) (Fig. 134), our third figure, Bengali art criticism comes of age. Nowhere is the tension between academic naturalism, the colonial legacy and the search for an alternative canon more poignantly expressed than in the writings of this short-lived



134 Jyotirindranath Tagore: *Balendranath Tagore*

aesthete. His first essays are the typical reactions of an admirer of Classical art well nurtured by 'English' education. We share his thrill in discovering Ravi Varma because he explains what thrills him. As his essays evolve, the seeds of cultural nationalism start to sprout. There is a precociousness in his small output as he reflects on his reasons for enjoying a particular work and charmingly compares two opposing artistic styles so as to reveal their special qualities. Such reflection is rare in the art criticisms of later writers who tend to be rather breathless in their rhetoric. In this intelligent connoisseur, writing often from intimate knowledge (such as of the miniatures in the Jaipur Art Gallery), we find a deeper-than-usual questioning of the colonial legacy. This inevitably entailed self-questioning; yet by doubting naturalism, Balendranath eroded the very foundation on which his own artistic judgements rested.[35]

His first essay, 'Pictures on the Wall' (1891), delights us with its unselfconscious air. It shows, as no other writing of the period does, what the taste of a young and affluent English-educated Bengali was like. Balen's collection of pictures comprised chiefly reproductions of sentimental Victorian works, but it did include Calcutta Art Studio prints and a few traditional miniatures. He showed perspicacity in his comments on the use of line in a Japanese print in his possession. He was discerning in his reaction to nudes. Speaking of a French salon painting, he remarked that its faces were not as refined as its figures. Balendranath was always a keen observer of feminine charms. The pictures in his collection were the ingredients of his reveries, he said.[36]

Balendranath's enthusiasm for Indian art began with his coming upon Ravi Varma in 1893. The south Indian painter was at that time virtually unknown in Bengal, where Calcutta Art Studio prints reigned supreme. Balendranath was the very first to describe the work of the artist. He witnessed the rapidity with which Varma's oleographs overtook the market. Even mud huts in remote villages were decorated with his 'smiling South Indian beauties'.[37] In his preamble on Varma, Balendranath confessed touchingly that he knew no criteria for evaluating such an 'indigenous gallery of paintings'. His taste was limited to a second-hand knowledge of Raphael and Titian, his only direct experience of art consisted of cheap Kalighat pictures and Studio lithographs. The availability of 'English' education had benefited literature, he said, but hardly a fraction of that vitality could be felt in Indian art. Then the young critic injected an ambivalent note: however great European art was, it could not satisfy Indian emotional needs, for it was alien to Indian sensibilities; but since progress in art was inevitable, Balendranath sincerely regretted that Indian painting had not advanced beyond primitive daubings. How therefore was art to progress in India? – by bringing to life the *Purāṇic* stories, said Balendranath. Who had succeeded in doing this? – Ravi Varma.[38]

Unlike other writers of the time, Balendranath established Varma's

credentials by vividly contrasting his oleographs with the Calcutta Art Studio lithographs. The Studio gods and goddesses with their wooden expressions, weak anatomy and garish colours fell short of expectations. Never before had the *Purāṇas* been painted in such a convincing manner; they overwhelmed the viewer with a gamut of feelings from high elation to deep misery. Varma's women were most fetching, which Balendranath attributed to their naturalism. He advised the Calcutta Art Studio to resort to real female models.[39]

Surely Balendranath's advocacy of naturalism in Hindu narrative painting ran counter to conventional Hindu iconography with its complex symbolism? Not to his way of thinking. To elucidate Varma's strength, Balendranath introduced the literary word *bhāva*, which we shall encounter in other contexts. This is a key concept in Sanskrit aesthetics, which may be loosely translated as 'feeling'. It was now pressed into the service of representational art. According to Balendranath, the realisation of *bhāva* in art required the naturalistic treatment of feeling and emotion, not literal depictions of the superhuman attributes of Hindu gods. He elaborated the concept in his essay 'Pictures of Hindu Deities' (1893) in more general terms. Implicit in his remarks was Varma's historicist ideal, yet on closer look we find the essay shot through with ambiguities. Balendranath could not help but admire Classical art, while anxiously asking if it was legitimate to do so. The Hindu pantheon did not enjoy the inimitable physical beauty of Classical Greek sculpture, but it embodied 'our inner desires and cultural aspirations'.[40]

Seen from the subsequent nationalist period, Balendranath's response to Indian miniature painting in later years becomes easy to comprehend. He began to employ contrasts to suggest radical differences between cultures. 'The Art Gallery of Delhi' (1898) opens with one such: 'By modern standards, [the Indian miniature] lacks delicate chiaroscuro or the light touch of the brush; nonetheless, the disappearing art of this ancient school is unquestionably entrancing'.[41] The title itself is a word play; the gallery is a gallery of the imagination – for there was no art gallery in Delhi at this time. Balendranath's remarks were based on a solid knowledge of the Mughal and Rajput paintings at Jaipur, however. The article dwells on the differences between these miniatures and colonial art. Indian miniatures were quite unlike western paintings, he said – in their ideas, composition and colour schemes and in their serenity – all of which reflected eastern mentality and experience. European paintings were suffused with the mellow light of a temperate continent. Bengali art students under that influence could not do justice to the light of the Indian landscape. 'Our neglected light survived only in old art', Balen commented ruefully. He made a further distinction. The European artist, working on a large scale, took in the whole scene from a distance as it were, so that the details were merged in the overall composition. Those beholding it were expected to stand back from the picture to enjoy it

fully. But miniature paintings yielded their vibrancy and rich decorative details only to close inspection. (Balendranath said he preferred their economic calligraphy to the illuminated texts of medieval Europe, with their surfeit of reds, blues and golds.)[42]

The concluding paragraph of 'Pictures of Hindu Deities' foreshadows the post-1900 upsurge of cultural nationalism which Balendranath did not live to see. By 1898, he had come to realise why Indian art so appealed to him: it did not aim to copy objects faithfully but to translate inner feelings into paint. It was futile to try to imitate the vast richness of nature, hence Indian artists had subtly learnt to avoid unnecessary details. The blue Kṛṣṇa of the Calcutta Art Studio had once jarred his sensibility; now, said Balendranath, he held the use of pure colours to be the special prerogative of Indians. For him, the blue and yellow horses of miniature painting had lost their strangeness. But his Bengali readers remained to be convinced: unlike him, very few of them had visited the art gallery at Jaipur.[43]

As this penultimate essay turned increasingly political, it castigated the blind worship of western art by the Bengal bhadralok. The passage strongly echoes Owen Jones:

> Whenever educated, westernised taste has interfered in this intuitive skill [of Indians] of applying pure colours, art has been distorted by the barbaric touch, as it were. The 'barbarians' have learnt only to comprehend the dictionary meaning of natural and artificial. They wish to turn the flowers on the carpet into real flowers and impose English patterns on the dazzling traditional colours of sari borders. The more mimetic the pattern is, the less artistic it becomes.[44]

How could one re-educate oneself in the subtleties of Indian miniatures? – by creating, said Balendranath, a proper cultural environment which would integrate paintings into architecture as an essential part of the decoration, not as superfluous impediments. Indian miniatures did not suit British frames; they particularly suffered in a modern drawing-room full of distracting Victorian bric-a-brac; to appreciate them properly, one needed to remove them from the colonial environment. Here was an integrated vision of an ideal environment, based on the notion that painting must blend with architecture – something crucial in the next phase of nationalist art. The vision was merely hinted at in Balendranath's unfinished final essay on Ravi Varma (1899), in which he revised his earlier unqualified admiration for the master. The artist's drawbacks were now obvious even to his untrained eye. Though Varma was generally able to convey the past's tranquility, the details in his *Purāṇic* narratives belonged to academic historicism and not to ancient India. The Neoclassical architecture shown in the background further destroyed the illusion.[45]

7 IDEOLOGY OF 'SWADESHI' ART

> [Art's] rebirth in India today can only take place, if it be consciously made the servant and poet of the mighty dream of an Indian Nationality. For the same reason, there is little or nothing in England now that can be called Art. An imperialised people have nothing to struggle for, and without the struggle upwards there can be no great genius, no great poetry.
>
> Sister Nivedita, *Modern Review*, 1907

THE BACKGROUND

The Raj and the essence of Hinduism

Balendranath's death coincided with the turning point in nationalist art, as his criticism of Ravi Varma foretold the end of the age of optimism. A conjunction of forces – disenchantment with western education, a renewed confidence in Hindu civilisation, and a changing outlook on progress and its artistic expression, academic naturalism – helped to define the specific character of Indian art, a non-Classical tradition. The ensuing *swadeshi* (indigenous) ideology of art thrived on the dichotomy between the 'spiritual' East and the 'materialist' West.

In 1835, during the debate on education for Indians, Macaulay, who spoke of creating 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect', epitomised the high tide of westernisation.[1] In 1857 such confidence perished on the dusty plains of Meerut and Lucknow. Exclusion rather than assimilation became the keynote; a cautious and contained intervention became the administrative policy.

Ideas of race, hierarchy and evolution replaced the Enlightenment ideas of Macaulay, Bentham and Mill. Their writings had ranked societies on a scale of social progress but had not deemed the 'backwardness' of non-Europeans as inherent. Racial determinists of the later period ascribed such lack of progress to the 'personality' of each racial group, an idea that sought confirmation in the Aryan myth. The Hindus had made

some gains from the myth which had conferred the status of western *Urheimat* on ancient Indian society. However, if the Raj was forced to concede racial affinities between the Hindus and the British, it was reassured that the Indian Aryans had remained in a time warp. This had far-reaching implications for colonial policy.[2] Previously, Hindu backwardness was seen as the outcome of climate or institutions; now government measures were predicated on the inborn and unalterable differences between the British and the Indian character.

As a reflection of racial psychology, Indian art was simply incompatible with European naturalism, with progress as its mainspring. Birdwood, an ardent advocate of the idea, also happened to dislike industrial Britain and to admire Indian arts as the product of an ideal pre-industrial community. High officials listened carefully to Birdwood when legislating on art education. In the wake of the first major political upheaval in 1905, the Raj became an ardent advocate of 'authentic' Indian art, abandoning westernisers to their fate. Renaissance naturalism simply went against the grain of Indian culture. Instead, a flat, linear artistic style was identified with the essence of Hindu India. Whereas previously the 'native artist' enjoyed a low but secure place within academic art, he was now excluded altogether. On the other hand, such exclusion of Indian art was taken over by nationalists when they set out to assert their cultural identity; the innate differences between Indians and Europeans expressed different artistic spirits. In short, the phoenix of nationalist art rose on the ashes of the Victorian adage: Indian art was the highest form of decoration.[3]

Artists entered the political arena in 1905, the year that Bengal was partitioned at Curzon's behest. The bhadralok spearheaded this first widespread unrest in India with a demand for *swarāj* (self-rule), and their chosen weapon was *swadeshi* (indigenousness). *Swadeshi* was economic war against the Raj on two fronts: boycotting British goods while promoting indigenous manufactures.[4] The call for self-reliance spilled over into the domain of art, encouraging artists to use it as a political weapon. Cultural autonomy complemented economic self-sufficiency. Abanindranath Tagore's *Bhārat Mātā* (Fig. XXI), his only painting with an overt political message, was produced during the era of *swadeshi* unrest. In 1912, *The Dawn Magazine*, a leading nationalist weekly, explained the reason for the political involvement of artists:

> One of the most remarkable though less pronounced features in our present-day public life is the steady growth of a number of movements, literary, historical and artistic, which represent a distinct phase of the working of the Indian mind in favour of what in the absence of a better name may be styled non-political Indian nationalism. In Bengal, the literary and historical movement [for reviving] old Indian, and especially old Bengali history and literature . . . has succeeded . . . in directing our countrymen towards the relics . . . of our past . . . Another phase of the same movement in favour of a non-political Indian nationalism, is the artistic [one] . . .[5]

The creation of Hindu identity

In the nineteenth century, cultural nationalism was the order of the day. There are striking parallels in the growth of cultural nationalism between India, Ireland and East Europe in the way their national self-images were created through a shared culture. As in India, Slav nationalists were divided by language, culture and religion. The first stirrings of Slav nationalism, as in India (especially Bengal), were articulated in literary works.[6] But cultural nationalism in Asia, as for example in India, was also the response of traditional societies to the challenge of modernism. Empires have existed since the dawn of history; yet European colonial empires were unique in facing nationalist resistance almost from their inception. Unlike earlier military or bureaucratic empires, colonialism came at a time when Europe herself was undergoing social transformation. These forces of change, and their ideological mainstay, the notion of progress, put enormous pressures on non-European societies, undermining their stability and yet offering them a powerful means of resistance. The doctrine that national aspirations could be fulfilled solely through self-determination, was swiftly assimilated by the western-educated in Asian countries.[7]

Colonial regimes were often directly responsible for the spread of western literacy among the indigenous elite. Macaulay put the case of the Raj with admirable candour: rather than being a case of altruism, it was to form a class of 'interpreters between us and the millions we govern . . . [to] that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects . . . with terms of science borrowed from the [West] . . . and to render them . . . fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population'.[8] The bhadralok took full advantage of 'English' education, overtaking others as chief purveyors of western learning in Bengal; but they were also bilingual, their mother-tongue being Bengali. Colonial rule created the conditions for the reform of Bengali, hitherto a vehicle for poetry and traditional disciplines such as deductive logic. English missionaries introduced a standard Bengali script, a unified language and printing technology. Bengali was offered a new lease of life, making it capable of producing objective discourses, not to mention novels and short stories. The impressive output of the Bengal Renaissance bears witness to the ease with which western literary modes were made to serve indigenous ideas.[9]

A remarkable product of this interaction was Bankim Chatterjee. Not only did he pen numerous essays in Bengali in which European political and social doctrines were held under his critical scrutiny, he even used the novel as a form of discourse. His *Kapālkundalā* charts the tragic fate of Rousseau's 'natural man' in society (the actual character in the novel is a woman). In short, the colonial renewal of Bengali – the first such modernisation of an Indian language – allows us to study the complex interface of tradition and change. The Bengali elite stood in a curious

position here. European Enlightenment committed them to cosmopolitan values; but the same ideas also heightened their national identity. Printing technology played a crucial part, not merely in the growth of vernacular languages; it helped to spread political consciousness. The readership, invisibly linked through print, formed 'the embryo of the nationally-imagined community', as it was no longer confined to a region.[10]

A shared literary language conferred an identity on the bhadralok and a confidence to exclude those who did not have access to it. The bhadralok also cultivated a spoken language that set them further apart from the *chhotolok* of the unrefined tongue. In India, as in Russia and the Balkan countries, the quest for national identity followed westernisation; this identity in its turn focused on vernacular literature. In short, linguistic revivals led to cultural renaissances, preceding the demand for national independence. The colonial intelligentsia did not fail to be moved by the heroism of William Tell or the self-sacrifice of Joan of Arc. But they also saw their own bondage mirrored in these stirring tales.[11]

During the Bengal Renaissance, the link between language and identity was spelt out by a nationalist:

> Indeed we can hardly conceive a more glorious object, a more sublime spectacle, than a nation . . . who could form and highly refine a language, write elaborate works on its grammars and compose hymns and prayers while their brethren in other parts of the world could hardly think it possible to represent the elementary sounds in their speech by visible characters.[12]

Imagining Aryan ancestors

This paean to ancestral language refers, not to Bengali but to the Aryan *Ursprache* Sanskrit, the European discovery of which fed into the modern Hindu's image of his past. National 'pride' remains the most potent sentiment of our age, as it articulates the social, economic and political aspirations of a community. As human beings we need to belong, and we are members of different groups, of involuntary ones such as class and gender, and of elective ones such as professions or clubs. Of these, the most powerful feelings of belonging are stirred in us by the myth of common descent. In the last century, in the wake of wide literacy and printing technology, the national 'will' ousted earlier collective notions. One need not go as far as Kedourie to say that 'nationalism' is a fabrication of the native intelligentsia to combat foreign rule; but it is an invented tradition to the extent that it 'automatically implies a continuity with the past'.[13] Far from being spontaneous and timeless, the authentic pedigree for the nation is manufactured by a selective reading of the past, ruthlessly suppressing aspects that are incompatible with the aspirations of the

dominant group. In India with its motley of castes, classes, languages, regions and religions, no community can claim an exclusive inheritance. Thus the nationalist image of 'a homogeneous Hindu past' was by implication a term of exclusion.[14]

In 1902–3, *The Dawn Magazine* was jubilant that European writers from William Jones to Birdwood had 'established beyond all doubt the fact that Indian art, literature, science and philosophy – all belong to a remote past'.[15] This appeal to history exposed a desperate necessity in colonial Bengal. In the early nineteenth century, Hindu 'backwardness' was drummed into the English-educated by Evangelists and Utilitarians. In mid-century, the English public-school cult of manliness and the Darwinian doctrine of the fittest painfully reminded Bengalis of their physical slightness. Moreover, Raj paternalism preferred the 'martial races' of the north-west to the educated Bengali. The bhadralok had gone for 'a larger slice of the imperial cake', with the ensuing threat to the English ruling class. Kipling's 'cowardly' ICS baboo was seen as being incapable of exercising authority even when allowed to do so.[16]

English, the conduit to modern knowledge, was also the language of the foreign rulers. Access to it did not guarantee social acceptance, for after all, even within Britain, language reinforced class distinctions. Since western values were the measure against which the colonised was evaluated, if he was unable to absorb them he was a failure; if on the other hand he was too successful, he was accused of aping his overlords.[17] The artist Valentine Prinsep's favourite term for a quaint Indian was 'baboo'. Such contempt created an acute ambivalence in the bhadralok, who took to heart the stereotype of the effete Bengali. The cause of his infirmity was traced to racial degeneration, which of course was the particular Bengali expression of a global anxiety. The Hindu Mela organised gymnastics to improve Bengali physique. The slide of Bengal politics into terrorism, as in Ireland, can be largely ascribed to widespread racial condescension.[18]

The Bengal Renaissance in the sense of cultural regeneration required its golden age in order to assuage a feeling of inadequacy. Nothing boosted budding nationalism more than an appeal to the past. Western thinkers viewed history not only as the collective memory of a nation, but also as investing with legitimacy its present actions. 'A nation without history, without antecedents, without character, must begin to build their good name on a surer foundation, than a silly imitation of . . . their superiors', admonished *Delhi Sketch Book* in connection with a duel fought by two Indians. It was to challenge such British stereotypes that the early nationalist Surendranath Banerjea addressed a public meeting in Calcutta: 'miserable and degraded as we are, our degradation has followed upon a chain of sequences', but history demonstrated that there still remained relics of past greatness, that the Hindus were not only great in literature and science but in war as well. Rebutting the charge that Hindus were an unhistorical nation, Banerjea insisted that all ancient

records had perished in India. He exhorted his audience to take up history writing in order to present an accurate picture of past Hindu greatness, instead of acquiescing in British distortions. 'Is it still possible to recover the history of ancient Bengal?', asked the novelist Bankim Chatterjee, 'surely it is not impossible. But few Bengalis have that capability. Whether a Bengali or an Englishman, the man who was most qualified for this task did not feel like undertaking it'.[19] Bankim's regret was directed at the historian Rajendralala Mitra.

From Bengali to Hindu nationalism

During the Bengal Renaissance, the nationalist impulse was at first local. Playwrights, novelists and poets in their search for early patriots unearthed heroes half-remembered in popular legends who had resisted 'foreign' rule. Shiraj ud-Daulah, the last Mughal viceroy of Bengal, was portrayed in at least one famous play as the first patriot and tragic victim of British perfidy. Although Shiraj was invested with a consciousness he did not possess, he was able to fulfil the assigned historical function. The net was gradually cast outside Bengal to bring in other, Hindu rulers who had confronted foreign invaders, notably the Rajput Rana Pratap and the Maratha Shivaji.[20]

When the Bengali elite discovered Hindu patriots of the past from outside Bengal, they reflected an expansion of the nationalist horizon. If earlier on, Bengali nationalists had acted as surrogates for other Indians, now the Hindus spoke for the whole of India. Not that Hindu consciousness did not exist before the last century, but that identity was fragmented and contingent upon caste and regional affiliations. Moreover, to take the case of Bengal, though its original population was Hindu, it had absorbed many Muslim social and cultural practices during long Muslim rule. But the emerging nationalism in the 1860s threw Hindu identity into sharp relief, while conditions for its self-assertion were being created in Orientalist literature. Thus even as the bhadralok viewed themselves as the original inhabitants of the subcontinent, Bengali nationalism was not abandoned; it simply flowed into a wider Hindu nationalism.[21]

Hindus never lost a high opinion of their ancient culture, but missionary criticisms put them on the defensive. The turning point was Max Müller's critical edition of the *Ṛg Veda* (1845–79), which confirmed the pre-eminence of this early Aryan text in world literature. Building upon the foundations of Jones, Wilkins and Colebrooke, Müller's research restored Hindu confidence, offering them a new perception of the Vedas. Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, appealed exclusively to these hymns as the sole repository of Hindu wisdom. He had little English but is said to have always carried Müller's volume with

him. Müller himself was satisfied with his recovery of Vedic India though he faced the hostility of European scholars, a reconstruction with which Hindu nationalists identified. No wonder all India mourned his death, as the Parsi reformer Behramji Malabari recorded.[22]

Other minor Orientalists were no less influential. Edwin Arnold wrote a highly romantic biography of the Buddha. An upholder of the imperial idea, Arnold represented the Buddha as the founder of a spiritual empire, a sentiment that attracted Indian nationalists. By the end of the century materials for exalting India's past were available not only in the West but also to English-educated Indians: Sacred Books of the East series, Trubner's Oriental Series, the Harvard Oriental Series, translations of Indian classics and publications of the Archaeological Survey of India. In the early nineteenth century, while rejecting missionary charges of Hindu backwardness, the Indian elite sought to remove what they regarded as socially reprehensible practices. The more extreme among them, the Young Bengal, a radical westernising group (see ch. 8, p. 269), for instance, renounced tradition *in toto*, turning to Europe in desperation. And yet by the second half of the century even reactionary practices were sought to be accommodated, so radically had the situation changed.[23]

Reading early Indian nationalists, it is all too easy to form the impression that their claims were no more than the neurotic self-reassurance of a subject people. It is well therefore to recall the reputation that India enjoyed in western Romanticism. European discovery of Sanskrit in the late eighteenth century, argues Raymond Schwab, led to a renaissance comparable in its impact to the sixteenth-century one. I alluded to the Bengali author's pride in Sanskrit, the Aryan *Ursprache*. Herder, the leading exponent of linguistic nationalism, was also an adherent of the Aryan myth and of India as the 'Magna Mater' of western civilisation. Such Romantic adulation was naturally crucial in the making of the Hindu motherland, counteracting the colonial badge of inferiority.[24]

Colonialism and cultural authenticity

The search for the Hindu heritage became a burning issue among cultural nationalists. Srimani's regret that the lack of sources prevented the writing of a true history of Indian art was a sign of the times. Ravi Varma had heeded Clio's call in his efforts to revive ancient culture. Artistic revivals were not unique to India however; they are a modern phenomenon. Romantic sensibility invested the past with a new meaning, making us aware of its essential alienness – that it was 'a foreign country', which could and must be studied with detachment. This 'objectification' of the past was sanctified by archaeology. The difference between the Renaissance and Romanticism is instructive here. The Humanists treated the

Classical tradition as an unbroken continuum stretching right back to antiquity. The eighteenth century no longer perceived this link, as it celebrated the rupture of consciousness with a fresh look at history. 'Imagining' the past assumed an urgency, for it conferred legitimacy on national aspirations. But paradoxically, the more decisive the break with the past, the more its modern restorers asserted its continuity. Yet, in the industrial age, for all practical purposes, tradition as historic continuity was dead.[25]

The impetus for recovering India's past did not initially come from Indians; there was no special need to make a self-conscious appeal to history. For eighteenth-century India, at its moment of colonisation, was still traditional, and the link between the past and the present still intact. Moreover, since there was no central agency to chronicle the past, earlier periods gradually faded from memory. But for the East India Company, dredging up India's past was of the utmost importance. As B. S. Cohn argues, 'The major interpretative strategy by which India was to become known to Europeans in the 17th and 18th century was through a construction of a "history" of India'.[26] Knowledge was surely the secret of efficient control. In addition to Max Müller's Vedic studies, British archaeologists Prinsep and Cunningham and Indian historians Rajendralala Mitra and R. G. Bhandarkar provided the missing pieces in the jigsaw of Indian history.

The new image of 'Hindu' India offered the alluring prospect of historical continuity and cultural unity, ignoring significant breaks. As the past was consolidated and codified, its 'pure' essence was held up against 'hybrid' colonial culture. It is obvious that the achievements of the Bengal Renaissance were the result of colonial interaction. And yet, as the western-educated faced repeated British taunts as hybrids, as opposed to 'traditional' Indians, defining and upholding the 'authentic' tradition became a matter of self-respect for them. Celebrating the newly-won confidence, the *swadeshi* ideology imagined the Hindus as the exclusive inheritors of India's past. Thus the somewhat unexpected gift of colonialism was the Orientalist image of a Hindu community that cut across caste, language and region. This in effect disinherited other Indians, notably the Muslims. Bankim, for instance, in some of his popular novels portrayed Muslim rulers as 'aliens', from whom 'authentic' Hindu civilisation had to be rescued. It would be simplistic not to recognise that, as a colonial administrator, Bankim's opposition to the Raj was disguised in political allegory. His most influential novel, *Ānandamath*, was correctly read by Bengali nationalists as resistance to British rule and not to past Muslim rulers. Unsurprisingly, Aurobindo Ghosh's revolutionary tract, *Bhawāni Mandir*, drew inspiration from it. Notwithstanding, Bankim himself was not always immune to the charge of equating the Hindu nation with the Indian.[27]

Authenticity was bound to figure prominently in cultural expressions,

namely, art and literature. One is not absolutely sure why vernacular literature resolved the issue more successfully. As Whorf argues in another context, it may be that language creates its own world-image. The modern novel and other literary imports were quickly and efficiently put to indigenous usage. Bengali novels were entirely successful in capturing local experiences and expressions. The bilingual bhadralok soon learned to avoid creative writing in English. After his unsuccessful novel in English, Bankim channelled his entire energy into Bengali. The foremost nineteenth-century poet, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, too, learnt from his mistake and left his finest works in the vernacular. The supreme achievement of this colonial process was Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore's originality was internationally acknowledged even though he made no secret of the fact that he often turned to English Romantic poets for inspiration. The last flowering of the Bengal Renaissance as a synthesis of East and West was seen in the great film director, Satyajit Ray (1921–92).[28]

Sculpture and painting were altogether different, precisely because they appeared to the Victorians to obey self-evident 'canons of taste'. Yet these canons were those of mimetic art seen through Victorian eyes, which added two further conditions: a lofty moral purpose and the propensity to progress. In literature no comparable canon enjoyed this universality. The reason may lie in the fact that, except in France, there did not exist a universal 'neoclassical' canon to appeal to. The English, Celtic and German literature could not, for the most part, be assimilated to a single Classical tradition. Indeed, they grew up partly in repudiation of it, or at least the dominant French version of it. Rabindranath's unique western success can be partially ascribed to the absence of such a canon. The norms of Sanskrit literature were alien to European sensibility, and yet they did not fail to appeal to the Romantic imagination.[29]

Art on the other hand was ideologically 'loaded' from the start. Although Abanindranath is accepted today as the first painter to restore the national heritage, the pioneer in this was Ravi Varma. However, as academic art was closely identified with imperial triumphalism, an 'authentic' national expression could not be tainted by being associated with the Raj. Since Victorians denied the fine arts to India, accepting their artistic canon compromised the nationalist. Abanindranath's generation rejected Varma's historicism as an inadequate guarantee of 'authenticity', and staked its own claim on the revival of indigenous artistic styles.[30]

The quest for an authentic style joined hands with the new Hindu identity – unified, timeless, and ahistorical – in the creation of a nationalist myth. From this perspective, culture was not an evolving process; so art too must exude a pristine essence, any deviation from which was demeaning. Yet, the evolution of any art form, not to mention Indian, shows that its strength lies not in sterile aloofness but in its ability to absorb new influences. One does not ask if Mughal painting was pure or hybrid

simply because it absorbed European Mannerism. However, there is a more serious issue here. The moral panic felt by colonial artists in their search for cultural authenticity exposes the self-conscious nature of that search. As in modern Europe, the historicist revival of an 'authentic tradition' in India was a symptom of its loss. Significantly, the quest for authenticity did not begin in India until traditional art had virtually disappeared. Moreover, if one takes the Patna School of the last century, these artists were not unduly worried that borrowing from the West would compromise their Indianness.[31] Still in a living tradition, they were not conscious of the syndrome of cultural purity. Even in the nationalist era, the distinction between the highly self-conscious 'indigenous' art of the elite and the unselfconscious popular art such as prints that did not eschew European ideas was noticeable.

The global search for Utopia

The *swadeshi* nationalists who sought to free Indian art from the Classical contagion found unexpected allies in romantic rebels against progress. The greatest critics of the Industrial Revolution were Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris in the last century, as Gandhi was to be in ours. But the primitivist longing for a harmonious pre-industrial community was widely diffused. What held the assemblage of Russian Slavophiles, European Theosophists, Japanese and Indian Pan-Asianists, the leaders of the Irish Literary Revival and members of the Arts and Crafts Movement together was their opposition to western rationality, industrial society and academic illusionism.

Friendships were struck up between unlikely individuals, alliances formed and international networks built to make common cause against industrial capitalism. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, founder of Theosophy, the crusade against western materialism, set up the society's headquarters near Madras. Her family knew the Slavophil Aksakovs. Her Theosophist successor, Annie Besant, became an Indian nationalist. Madame Blavatsky's compatriot, the mystic painter Nicholas Roerich, made his home in India. In 1885 the leading figures in the Irish Literary Movement, George Russell (A.E.), W. B. Yeats, T. W. Rolleston and John Egglington, became members of the Dublin Theosophical Lodge. The Irish Revival joined hands with Theosophy during the heyday of Aryanism, as the Celtic *avatār* became the avenger of the oppressed Irish. Yeats's friend Charles Johnston went out to India; the Irish poet owed his discovery of Hinduism to Mohini Chatterjee, the Bengali disciple of Madame Blavatsky. A. P. Sinnet, Theosophist author of *Esoteric Buddhism*, was a mentor of the group. During the time Yeats was part of Rolleston's Irish Literary Society in London, he introduced Tagore to the West and supported his Nobel Laureateship. Russell and Rolleston signed

the celebrated letter to *The Times* in protest at Birdwood's disparagement of Indian art.[32]

Two other signatories, Walter Crane and W. B. Lethaby, were members of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, as was Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, a key figure in the revival of Indian art. His *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* (1908) was published by Morris' Kelmscott Press. The American inspirer of artistic revival in Japan was Ernest Fenollosa as Havell was in India. On his visit to Boston, Vivekananda met Fenollosa, and they exchanged ideas on the cultural unity of Asia. Fenollosa's Japanese disciple Okakura completed his Pan-Asianist document *The Ideals of the East* while staying with the Tagores in Calcutta. He was expected to meet Coomaraswamy on his visit to London. The introduction to *The Ideals* was by Vivekananda's disciple, Sister Nivedita, an Irishwoman. The Irishman, James Cousins, secretary to the Theosophical Society in Madras, took up the cause of Indian art around 1915.[33] The list could go on.

The global language of resistance was a late child of Romanticism, but transfigured in the Asian context. Asian nationalism, we have seen, represented economically 'backward' countries facing the challenge of industrial progress. Country after country in Asia adopted a new weapon to combat accusations of inferiority; they claimed that their difference with the dominant West lay in their spirituality. Material weakness was turned into a virtue by Asian nations, for it enabled them to resist the evils of technological progress. This nationalist rhetoric is not unfamiliar. It is startling however to read in Yeats that 'the spiritual history of the world has been the history of the conquered races',[34] an assertion which lay at the heart of Irish nationalism. The idea that defeat conferred a spiritual strength superior to the conqueror's materialism was also attractive to eastern thinkers: witness Mahatma Gandhi's forging of a political weapon out of physical frailty.

Significantly, Yeats, like Asian writers, denounced urban life as evil. And it was not merely among the politically weak that this doctrine exerted its fascination. Its most forceful advocates were in Britain, the home of the Industrial Revolution. The century that introduced unprecedented economic advances, also witnessed problems of unplanned growth. It was a 'bleak age', an age of overpopulation, grave unrest and social deprivation; it was also an age that gave rise to prophets. While Carlyle thundered against the soulless machine, Ruskin excoriated industrial society, offering in its place an ideal rural community that blended aesthetic and moral values. Birdwood's idealisation of the Indian village was Ruskinian in spirit. Among visions of anti-industrial utopia, none was more persuasive than Morris' *News From Nowhere*, set in the future. To Morris, no less than to Ruskin, the Age of Chivalry was infinitely preferable to the alienation of industrial conurbations.[35]

Of the enemies of Victorian values, few were as colourful as Theosophists (founded 1875), whose anti-materialist potion was made up of equal

parts of universal brotherhood, comparative religion, the occult, and a large dose of the Indian doctrine of reincarnation. Its joint founders, the Russian Helena Blavatsky and the American H. S. Olcott, duly located 'the light from the East' on the banks of the Ganges. Directing her polemics against western science and Christianity, Blavatsky offered instead the distilled essence of ancient faiths. Yet Theosophy never abjured the language of science, describing itself as 'the science of the spirit'. Its importance for India lay in the publicity it gave to Indian spirituality in the West. For a while the society was even keen to join forces with Dayananda's Arya Samaj.[36] Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott travelled the length and breadth of the subcontinent telling Indians what they had to offer the world; everywhere they were received with acclaim. Madame Blavatsky managed to convert the Congress leaders, Allan Octavian Hume and Gokhale, if only temporarily.

Madame Blavatsky's death in 1891 diluted the esoteric nature of Theosophy, enabling its entry into Indian politics; this was due largely to Annie Besant. Blavatsky's triumphal journey in the Aryan heartland was repeated in 1893 by Mrs Besant. The erstwhile British feminist denounced western materialism in countless lectures, coining the memorable phrase, 'India's spiritual mission to the world'. She won unprecedented popularity among Indians.[37] Valentine Chirol, a pro-Raj journalist, seeking to unravel the roots of *swadeshi* violence, credited her with giving the Hindus an aggressive confidence in their culture.[38] Mrs Besant embraced the Hindu way of life, distinguishing Aryan Hinduism from its 'corrupt' modern version. Even though orthodox Brahmins were reluctant to dine with her for fear of pollution, they welcomed the prospect of an orthodox revolt led by her.

The year 1893 marks the triumph of Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. The convention, meant to be the crowning event in the World's Columbian Exhibition, sent out invitations to thirty countries. India, the 'mother of religions', was well represented. As the convention brochure put it, she sent C. N. Chakravarti, the metaphysical Theosophist, P. C. Mazoomdar, a Brahmo and 'a master of eloquence', Vivekananda, the orange monk who 'exercised a wonderful influence over his auditors', the 'keen and courageous Nagarkar', the attractive Narasimha and finally, the acute, philosophical Gandhi (not the Mahatma). Swami Vivekananda had been sent to the Parliament with funds raised by the Hindus of Madras. For the first time an Indian was defending Hinduism to the world:

> Vivekananda is undoubtably the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation.[39]

So wrote *The New York Herald*. The Swami's triumphal progress continued all the way back to India. In Britain, a young Fröbel-trained

Irish teacher, Margaret Noble, fell under his spell and joined the Order of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. Arriving in Calcutta in 1898 to teach at a girls' school, she identified herself totally with Hindu nationalist aspirations. At a moving ceremony she was named Nivedita (the dedicated). Vivekananda's frenetic energy was burned out by 1902, his thirty-ninth year; but within these few years not only had he won European converts, but had become the idol of Hindu nationalists.[40]

THE IDÉOLOGUES

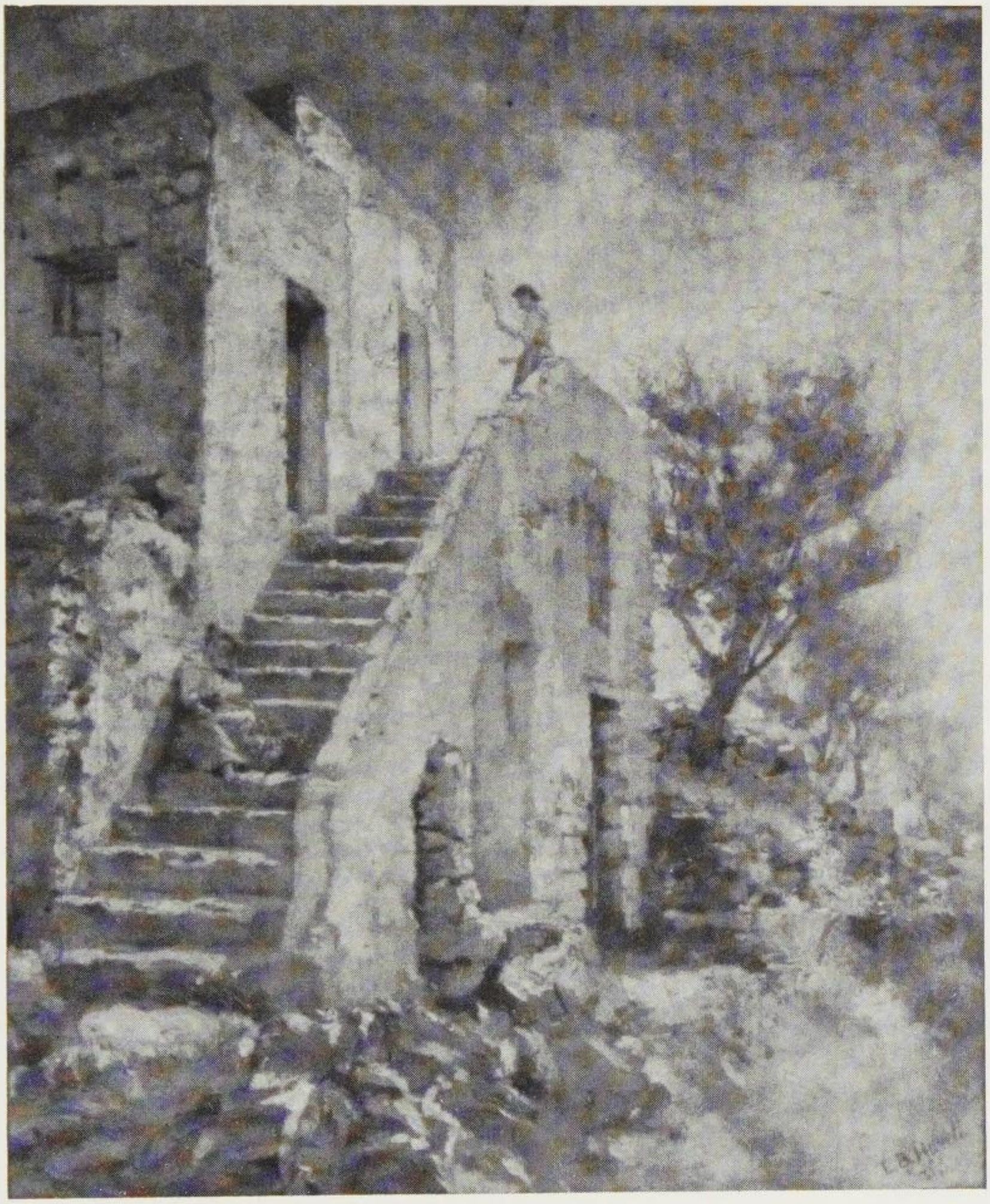
By 1900 the spiritual image of India as the counterpoint to European materialism was complete, nourished by western adulation and a new perception of her historic past. During this age of Hinduism triumphant, the war against missionaries was carried right into the heart of the enemy territory. Art gained indirectly from this and more directly from three champions of Indian art who appeared from the West: Ernest Binfield Havell (Figs 135, 136), Sister Nivedita and Ananda Coomaraswamy. Utopian critics of industrialism, they gave a sharp edge to *swadeshi* ideology, elaborating the spirituality of Indian art as the antithesis of Renaissance naturalism. The doctrine took shape between c. 1896–1910, though the final versions appeared later. Havell plunged into artistic reform soon after his arrival in Calcutta in 1896. Nivedita joined in discussions on art. Coomaraswamy did not however make his mark until the Bengal School of painting was well established. The three idéologues – Havell, Nivedita and Coomaraswamy – seemed to speak with one voice. Only later did the intellectual differences become evident. Havell furnished the aesthetic, Nivedita the moral and Coomaraswamy the metaphysical content of the *swadeshi* doctrine. Nivedita was the most fiery, Coomaraswamy the most persuasive, but Havell was the most systematic critic of naturalism. His years of experience as an art teacher were brought to bear on the practical aspects of the *swadeshi* doctrine.

'Gesamtkunstwerk' and E. B. Havell

Part of the uniqueness of Havell's art teaching lay in the single-minded pursuit of his deeply-held beliefs. At the same time, being of a remote disposition, Havell was incapable of forming close ties with his students, ruthlessly crushing all opposition to his ideas. Nor was his espousal of the useful arts particularly new; it already formed the main plank in Raj policy. Kipling and other teachers were no less committed to them. Havell never questioned the existence of the empire; he simply had no faith in the 'dead hand' of the Indian bureaucracy, against whom, especially against the Public Works Department, he waged a life-long

war. And yet, he expected the same bureaucracy (to which, after all, he belonged) to lead artistic revival in India.

A paternalist, Havell dreamed of an ideal Aryan empire, where bureaucrats, like the legendary Chinese mandarins, would act as friends, philosophers and guides to artist-artisans. This view was communicated to the Congress in no uncertain terms, even though his optimism was not shared by others. As early as 1901, in *Art and Education in India*, he had insisted on art appreciation as a duty rather than a pleasure. Havell's dour moralistic view of art informed his obsessive attacks on those who merely enjoyed art. His faith in state intervention in art education was endorsed by the London art conference of 1908. The meeting agonised over the English artisan's loss of aesthetic commitment; what went for the working classes was also true of the subject nations.[41]



135 *Left* E. B. Havell: *Landscape*, oil

136 E. B. Havell: *Decorative Design*, watercolour? This was used by him for teaching purposes at the art school, Calcutta

In 1893, Havell was commended by Birdwood, Secretary of the Society For the Encouragement and Preservation of Indian Art (London), for his 'great success in superintending the Madras School of Art where [he] had uniformly upheld the traditional patterns of Indian workmen, weeding out of their designs the Western influences [which] sometimes pervade their work'.[42] Havell was doing no more than pursue with vigour Birdwood's plans for Indian decorative arts. In 1896 he arrived in Calcutta, intent on putting the same principles into practice. He immediately showed his mettle in turning art-school issues into wider political ones, a flair welcomed in nationalist Calcutta. What he did not foresee was that his involvement with cultural politics would take him away from the artisans for ever.

The turning point at the art school came with Havell's unfolding of his plans, which differed considerably from those of other policy framers, including Birdwood. The clue to this difference is to be found in a passage in William Morris:

> I shall not meddle much with the great art of Architecture, and still less with the great arts commonly called Sculpture and Painting, yet I cannot in my own mind quite sever them from those lesser, so-called Decorative Arts, which I have to speak about: it is only in latter times and under the most intricate conditions of life, that they have fallen apart from one another; and I hold that, when they are so parted, it is ill for the Arts altogether: the lesser ones become trivial, mechanical, unintelligent . . . while the greater . . . are sure to lose their dignity of popular arts . . .[43]

Morris' vision of aesthetic unity was germane to Havell's doctrine that obliterated the distinctions between fine and decorative arts. Havell, like Kipling, was a product of South Kensington, and yet only he and not others was able to challenge the Victorian hierarchy that regarded articles of domestic use as inferior to the high arts. Birdwood's tragedy was that, for all his romantic attachment to the village arts of India, he could not cut himself loose from his Classical moorings. It was only by questioning Renaissance naturalism that Havell was able to see medieval European and Indian art with a fresh eye. One of the new generation of anti-Classical critics, Havell's insight into medieval European art, a non-Classical tradition, uniquely qualified him to inspire cultural nationalism in India. At his Royal Society of Arts lecture (1910), he reiterated his conviction that 'the aesthetic philosophy which controls the weaver's fingers is the same as that which controls the painter's brushes and the sculptor's chisel'.[44] This was the fateful meeting where Birdwood refused to consider Indian art on a par with Classical art, leading to his breach with Havell.

In *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (1908), Havell eloquently expounded the future of Indian art. But his blueprint for artistic nationalism, 'The Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India', first appeared in *The*

Hindu, the south Indian newpaper, in 1912. Published at the height of the *swadeshi* unrest, it summed up his years of teaching experience. His starting point, as with all heads of art schools, was the revival of handicrafts, a question examined by the government in 1875 and 1890. Havell pleaded for a return to the pre-industrial mode of production, denying vehemently that Indian handicrafts were dead. Havell's ideas were entirely Morrisian: western societies had become slaves to the machine; the machine had not improved craftsmanship, it had merely brought down the price of textiles. A non-industrial society, India could still escape the fate of the West by a sensible government policy. Indian artisans, after all, were incapable of becoming 'cogs' in the machine.[45]

These ideas make clear Havell's qualified opposition to the machine, similar to Morris's selective resistance to the machine age (and his allergy to steam power). The machine, in Havell's view, destroyed individual skill when used indiscriminately. In India, 'a handworker's paradise', improved methods and labour-saving devices would not impair the quality of products, nor lead to wholesale industrialisation. Havell's campaigns convinced the Indian elite of the importance of Indian handicrafts, especially the improved handloom. He even presented a British spining wheel to Abanindranath's mother. She, like many an upper-class woman during the *swadeshi* era, felt obliged to take up spinning. If all this sounds familiar, it was Havell who introduced the improved 'fly shuttle' loom in India in 1905. His cult of the spinning wheel came to fruition in Gandhi's vision of intermediate technology.[46] Havell drew attention to the handicrafts at the Congress exhibition of 1901, praising the journal *Indian Mechanic* for its imaginative display of Indian products. While the Hindu Mela of 1868 was the first to focus on handicrafts, their presence in the Congress session of 1901 signified the growing political importance of economic self-sufficiency. Initially concerned with political rights, pressure from different groups forced the Congress to turn to economic matters.[47]

Birdwood had been exposing the plight of the applied arts since the 1860s, as Havell acknowledged. But Havell's originality lay in his overarching vision of the arts, crowned by architecture, in an ideal community. The revival of handicrafts was not possible, argued Havell, in a society that denied a genuine function to them, where decoration was not integral to architecture. It was architecture that afforded the artists a unique opportunity for decorating a building, both within and without. An inspired vision of living space, part Victorian and part Indian, was behind Havell's ideal building: it had relief sculpture on the outside, paintings on the interior walls and everyday objects, useful and elegant, lay tastefully scattered in the rooms. This was also Morris's vision of architecture, the mother of the arts: a 'union of the arts mutually helpful and harmoniously subordinated to one another'.[48] Inevitably, Havell turned to frescoes as the mediator between fine and decorative arts in the

greatest periods, unlike the unintelligent modern 'craze for cabinet pictures'.[49]

I call Havell's unified vision of Indian art the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal, a word coined by German Romanticism. The tèrm reflects the widespread concern with the unity of the arts in the late nineteenth century, as seen for instance, in the frescoes of Puvis de Chavannes. In Britain, under its influence, architects and painters collaborated in decorations of public buildings.[50] A *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal informed Havell's writings on two levels: it taught him to approach ancient Indian art with imagination; this insight was then transferred to the role of art in modern Indian society. Thanks to Havell, one learned to read the Hindu temple as a complex synthesis of fine and applied arts. Of course his insight is unimaginable without the Arts and Crafts Movement and his discovery of medieval art. But Havell saw Hindu architecture as an embodiment of a hierarchical principle of decoration, from the simplest abstract ornaments to large figure reliefs. So to view the sculptures in isolation was to miss the point. Every aspect of temple decoration was infused with a 'spiritual' principle that gave unity to the architecture. It was a small step to Havell's volumes on Hindu art as the coherent expression of a culture. Perhaps today we are no longer taken aback by his description of Hindu sculpture and painting as fine arts, but in 1908 it shocked English critics.[51] Lacking such a synthesising vision, earlier teachers had tacitly accepted the low level of Hindu sculptures, concentrating on the 'useful arts' in expectation of an artistic revival. Havell's description of Indian painting and sculpture as fine arts was predicated on dissolving the fine/useful art distinction. Nothing brought down the Renaissance canon from its pedestal more easily than the insistence that all art was useful. This fresh outlook encouraged art students to take pride in Indian achievements, for the bhadralok artists could not participate in a revival that smacked of artisanal products.[52]

Havell's predilection led him in 1901 to trace the cultural rot in India to alien architecture. While the British filled colonial cities with Neoclassical, Neo-gothic and other 'historicist' styles, the westernised Indians in their turn aped their rulers in their homes. The final nail in the coffin was the bhadralok mania for Victorian bric-à-brac. Genuine Indian architecture could be revived, Havell insisted, only by employing the surviving Orissan builders and other traditional masons. The artisans would also benefit from this, since a building was a 'school' for sculpture and painting. This faith in architecture as a pivot in nation-building prompted Havell to joust over an appropriate style for the proposed capital in Delhi, announced at the Durbar of 1911. The art teacher, who viewed Mughal as the true Indian imperial style, campaigned tirelessly in favour of Indian builders. The Classical style, envisaged by Sir Edwin Lutyens, would deny Indian craftsmen the economic and cultural recovery. Architecture was so central to Havell's thinking that in 1913 he even felt that the

Mughal style would bring the British and the Indians together in a period of grave unrest.[53]

As Morris made art the centre of communal life, so Havell's holistic primitivism condemned the detached connoisseurship of colonial culture. Despairing of the Indian elite, whose corrupt taste dismissed Indian handicrafts as old-fashioned, he turned to the peasant as the embodiment of the true artistic instinct (Havell's simple uncorrupted peasant was pure Ruskin). Art was not for the wealthy; nor was it for pleasure. Commercialism had taught the bhadralok to enjoy art but to ignore its religious function. Havell urged the Congress leaders in 1901 to take a broader perspective and integrate art more fully into their national programme.[54]

The Italian Renaissance was at the root of modern connoisseurship and of artistic corruption, a topic hotly debated at the London Conference of 1908. In 1903, Havell had published his 'Open Letter to Educated Indians', rebuking them for their indifference to their own art. There European art was categorised into three: spiritual (Middle Ages), intellectual (Renaissance) and material (post-Renaissance). Artistic decline came in the seventeenth century, heralding the insincere art of the eighteenth and finally, the materialist art of the nineteenth. But the germs of decline went back to the Renaissance when art ceased to be a communal art. The English-educated in India had succumbed to this western 'connoisseurship', losing sight of the spiritual in Indian art.[55]

Education in crisis and Havell's remedy

The more Havell came to see the communal role of architecture as a 'facilitator' of other arts, the less he distinguished between temple sculptures and humble village utensils. If the western-educated were to accept art as part of everyday life, they had to be re-educated, a belief that took Havell out of the art school cloisters into the wider arena of colonial education; only an educational overhaul could revive the traditional arts. The impending crisis in the education system with its English literary curriculum strengthened Havell's hand. He was not surprised by the crisis, it merely vindicated him. The crisis in education stemmed partly from colonial policy. Perhaps nowhere in Asia was western literacy more welcome than in Bengal. In 1835, the Raj introduced higher education in English in order to fill the lower end of the bureaucracy. By mid-century, English education had become a passport to jobs. But even after government subsidy was reduced, English education continued to expand, as private colleges set up by Bengalis mushroomed. The reasons for the popularity of English in the province were both economic and a genuine excitement in the new world of European learning, its material and social sciences and its wealth of literature.[56]

But enthusiasm for English education turned sour when opportunities did not match expectations. Since education did not automatically lead to equality with the British in India, its practical value was questioned. Waning optimism about westernisation also reflected a new militant 'Aryan' Hinduism as expressed by Tilak for instance in his 'Arctic Home of the Vedas'. The education system lost favour not only with nationalists but with the Raj as well. As the demand for English education outpaced supply, claimed Valentine Chirol, standards fell precipitately. The student became a cramming machine; success in examinations promised an opening in the imperial bureaucracy. When this was denied, and the failure rate was high, it created disaffection. In Gaganendranath Tagore's 1917 cartoon the Calcutta University 'factory' churned out graduates in thousands (Fig. 137).[57]

Facing a growing demand for political rights, the Raj blamed the unrest on the easy availability of education. The 1901 education conference at Simla recommended higher pass marks to restrict student admission. In 1904, the Universities Act was passed to impose further control.[58] As for *swadeshi* nationalists, they voiced disquiet about an education based on an alien language, imprinting foreign literary values on the impressionable. This anxiety found a powerful advocate in Rabindranath, who had been spared a high-school education. In 'Shiksār Her Pher' (1892), he accused colonial education of setting the young adrift culturally, starving their minds of creativity which only a mother tongue could nurture. Since English did not spring from Bengali culture, it was not a fit vehicle for expressing a Bengali experience. It was only capable of producing clerks.[59]

As the national education movement gathered pace, Annie Besant founded a 'Hindu' institution of higher learning in 1898. Through his periodical, *The Dawn* (1897), Satish Chandra Mukherjee campaigned relentlessly against the English medium of instruction and its literary bias that discouraged science and the practical arts. The boycott of colonial institutions in 1905 included the government-funded Calcutta University. Mukherjee's alternative institution, launched with some local support, failed. Ambitious students still regarded the Calcutta University as the path to success. The national education movement generated a little light and a great deal of heat.[60] Nivedita, Coomaraswamy and other influential figures worked closely with the Dawn Society founded in 1902 by Mukherjee. Havell wrote for *The Dawn*. In 1898, Birdwood, a patron saint of the Hindu 'renaissance', was approached by Mukherjee for advice on national education. Delighted, Birdwood hailed the 'spontaneous revival of the indigenous and traditionary, literary and artistic and philosophical and religious life of India – India of the Hindus'.[61] They were urged to be self-reliant in education and to cultivate Sanskrit and the vernacular, hitherto neglected by colonial institutions. His more eccentric advice was on English. If it were to be retained, it should be approached

through Greek and Latin, and solely for private pleasures, such as reading the poets and 'the authorised [not revised] version of the Bible'.[62] In 1901–2, Birdwood lectured on the Hindu Aryan revival in Bombay, which *The Dawn* duly printed. To Birdwood art was the lynchpin of national regeneration.[63]

First drawn into the education controversy in 1900, Havell came out in 1903 against the neglect of aesthetics by the DPI. The cause of student unrest at the Calcutta University was traced to its barrack-like structures and a cure proposed: a pleasing environment as in Oxford or Cambridge would infuse a sense of beauty in students and turn them away from violent politics.[64] The locus of Havell's ideal education was ancient Greece

137 Gaganendranath Tagore: *The University Machine*, lithograph

which may appear inconsistent with his outspoken anti-Classicism. Yet as a Victorian, he could not deny the value of a Classical education. Philology and the Greek revival created a romantic vision of the Hellenes – fiercely moral in their sublime innocence, as was the Doric column, the emblem of rugged sincerity. Dr Arnold of Rugby equated the Greeks with godliness, later writers with veracity, athleticism and public-school virtues. Elsewhere in Europe, as in Germany for instance, the Greek serenity informed the concept of *Bildung*. With a sentiment worthy of Winckelmann, Havell accused the British of losing the Greek moral idea in art. In 1912, he praised ancient Indian education for its purported similarity with the Greek, something that was absent in British pedagogy.[65]

Nonetheless, English public-school education to Havell was sterile in its lack of art. 'At a time when our national education was miserably defective, and when our own national art had lost its vitality and sincerity', wrote Havell, 'we undertook to hold up the torch of European civilisation and progress to the East . . . The rank materialism which is the basis of the modern Indian university system tends to produce in the Indian mind the same attitude towards art that is characteristic of the European university man'.[66] The same mentality spawned both Ravi Varma and his admirers. Havell's remedy was to restore art to national as well as student life by including it in the Calcutta University curriculum. Drawing was already part of school courses but the idea of art within a liberal university education was novel. Mounting political unrest, as we know, was diagnosed by the Raj as a failure of education, which had become divorced from 'indigenous' values. Hence it was imperative to restore these values. Curzon's support of Havell's work for the Indian arts reflects the fear about academic education breeding seditious politicians. Havell was invited to the Simla education conference of 1901. However, none of his measures was implemented. This, Havell claimed later, resulted in a failure to create an art awareness among university graduates.[67]

Artistic nationalism according to Sister Nivedita

Nivedita's heady nationalism entailed less loyalty to the empire than Havell's. There 'can be no doubt', she declared, 'that some of the greatest art of the world, in many different ages, has been born of the impulse of Nationality'. Before embarking for India, she was warned by Swami Vivekananda:

> I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India . . . Yet the difficulties are many. You cannot form any idea of the misery, the superstition, and the slavery that are here. You will be in the midst of a mass

> of half-naked men and women with quaint ideas of caste . . . shunning the white skin through fear or hatred and hated by them intensely . . . you will be looked upon by the white as a crank and . . . your movements will be watched with suspicion.[68]

Nivedita remained a mentor of the Bengali artists until her early death. Havell's (and Coomaraswamy's) appeal was limited to the English-speaking Indians. Nivedita's essays translated from *Modern Review* touched a wider public, especially bhadralok women. Headstrong and enthusiastic, her personal magnetism affected those like Abanindranath who came in contact with her. She addressed India as 'our country', leaving all her personal effects to her adopted motherland. Her politics too was personal: Birdwood was the enemy and a poseur; allies were Havell, Coomaraswamy and the Tagores, even though Rabindranath himself was ambivalent about her. Nivedita's testament to nationalist art, published during the anti-Partition unrest, contrasted 'vicious theories of imperialism propagated by Curzon's 'school' with the 'Christian Socialism' of Lord Ripon. Nivedita's mentors were the Fabian Society and the Art and Crafts Movement.[69]

In sympathy with Theosophists, who wished to unite Indian spirituality with western science, Nivedita argued that 'the destiny of Imperial peoples [was] to be conquered in turn by the religious ideas of their subjects'. Her language of resistance was that of the Irish Literary Movement. Compare similar ideas in Yeats about Ireland. Great art, she asserted, was not the product of an affluent and dominant society but was born of an agonising spiritual struggle. Its 'rebirth in India today can only take place, if it be consciously made the servant and poet of the mighty dream of an Indian nationality'. Imperial art was necessarily overripe and decadent, far better 'the crudeness of colour, with the agony of thought behind. Far better were the rudest drawing with the weight of symbolism heavy on the drooping eyelids of the humanity protrayed'.[70] To Havell's disclaimer that he could only teach techniques of art, not produce genius, her rejoinder was typical:

> [the] essential ingredients [were] love of one's country, hope for the future, dauntless passion for India. These would make original genius out of copyists.[71]

Art was elevated to a spiritual level: 'the profession of the painter must come to be regarded, not simply as a means of earning a livelihood, but as one of the supreme ends of the highest kind of education'. So for art to flourish, the nation's freedom was essential. For its part, art must serve the nation with paintings on civic themes in public buildings. Havell's *Gesamtkunstwerk* architectural decoration was endorsed by her with a stern historic ideal dictated by an unflinchingly serious purpose. 'No mythic scenes should be allowed', Nivedita admonished, 'but only

famous events from ancient Indian history'. In keeping with the spirit of the time, religious temples were to be replaced with civic ones to the nation, in order to take up 'our connection with the past'. The exemplar was the civic humanism of Puvis de Chavannes, the painter of large public murals in Paris.[72]

In Nivedita's heartfelt comments we learn what mattered to her in art. Even more than Havell, she made practical suggestions for creating a national art which moved Abanindranath and his pupils. She spoke on two technical aspects in particular: light was as important in painting as colour contrasts. 'I have seen', she wrote, 'many oil paintings of dull unlighted tanks lined by thatched huts, the whole overshadowed by heavy forbidding trees, painted in blue-green. Now these depressing renderings of depressing scenes . . . a single luminous torch . . . would have changed the whole, as by a stroke of miracle'. Her second lesson was the power of suggestion, which idea Abanindranath probably owed to her. Nivedita exhorted students to seek out picturesque scenes to paint, the beggars, the boatmen of the Ganges, the bashful young Bengali bride, without which 'the mere technical excellences of which you learn to prate in English schools are bone without flesh; they are worse than valueless'.[73]

What Nivedita was offering here in all innocence are two central tenets of European art since Titian – the treatment of light and the power of suggestion. The strength of traditional Indian painting (especially Rajput), she failed to discern, lay not in such concerns but in a combination of pure colours in which the visual world played a contingent role. In India where 'the picture tells its own story', argued Nivedita, Ajanta was the best example of naturalism, 'as free and living in its enjoyment and delineation of nature as any modern school of realists'. If an Indian student was asked about European pictures, he would answer that truth to nature was their great attraction, she added. Approving of it, for the exclusion of nature would stunt Indian art, she proposed a marriage of the natural and the ideal. She identified several academic artists in Bengal who did precisely this. Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri's painting, *The Churning of the Ocean*, impressed her as a genuine Hindu conception 'full of the play of the strong and the grotesque on the one side, and equally strong, but noble and beautiful on the other, and the power and daring of the whole conception are undeniable'. Raychaudhuri's daughter, Sukhalata Rao, was also treated with sympathy. The 'correct' Hindu ideal of the two artists was praised; the style mattered less.[74]

In the same breath, she engaged in *swadeshi* rhetoric that 'truth to nature' cast a fatal fascination on Indian students. On another occasion she expressed her preference for archaic Greek art to *Venus of Melos*. 'A picture is not a photograph, art is not science. Creation is not mere imitation', she declared. Sensing, however, the inconsistencies in her position, she contended that love of nature was not exclusively western

but universal. Alert also to the danger of giving quarter to the archaeologists who detected Greek presence in the best Indian art, she told them off: 'India was too sophisticated to require the Grecian voice'. The Indian 'language' of art was clearly seen in the 'carved stone doors of the Orissan, and the beaten silver of southern temples'. Since Indian art possessed its own language, she argued, the practice of training students in Gothic vocabulary, for instance, had proved counter-productive, a view similar to that of Kipling and Griffiths. Nonetheless Nivedita had no doubt that Indian artists could assimilate lessons from the West without losing integrity, for there 'is such a thing as a *national* manner in art, and India needs only to add the technical knowledge of Europe to this manner of her own'.[75]

Such a need, she knew, existed in a moving painting based on the *Mahābhārata* in Jaipur. She felt that the 'creator of this gambling scene would have known quite well what to do with a little added science about vanishing points and the centre of vision . . . but it would never have led him to sacrifice his beauty and purity of colour, nor his power of making of a picture a piece of decoration'. In other words, Indian art could be improved by western science. She was further reassured by a painting at the Calcutta Art Gallery that single-point perspective was not a European monopoly. Little did she know that the painting's perspective was derived from European art.[76]

Nivedita's Victorian upbringing is revealing in its unconsciousness. She rejected Havell also on progress, for 'India is not, in matters of art, to hark back to old ways, and refuse to consider or adopt anything that is new'. Although Havell accepted a limited synthesis of the old and the new, artistic salvation for him lay in an unchanging tradition. As for Nivedita, she did not object to progress so long as it was in the right direction, that is, towards moral subjects. Thus she was fully committed to improving Indian art with 'scientific' advances and welcomed 'the opportunity which the European conception of art [offered] to an individual artist'.[77] A great artist expressed himself in an individual 'language'; an art 'that is followed by a hereditary guild tends to an unenduring sameness, tends to be ridden by conventions, till at last the mind of the community revolts, and seeks new ideals'. Of course we know that individualism was precisely what replaced the earlier artistic outlook in India. Nivedita dreamed of a modern national guild of Indian painters that revelled in a new freedom of imagination. Her guild was quite unlike the medieval one of Havell, for she was certain that the social clock could not be put back:

> Art, socially considered therefore has in our time gone through a great transition in India. And just as in Europe of the thirteenth century, Giotto, the master-painter of similar transition, left us the highest culture of his period in his works . . . so now and always the artist becomes free from the conventions of the caste.[78]

A powerful presence in Bengal, Nivedita's artistic *obiter dicta* sowed confusion on three points: on progress, artistic individualism and naturalism. When Havell and Nivedita spoke on the need for a national language of art, they meant two different languages. To the art teacher, the artistic language of each nation was unique; in India that national language was a flat non-representational one. To Nivedita, naturalism was a mark of universal art because the 'absolutely beautiful is understood by all humanity'. If a national artistic language did not rest on style, which was universal and borrowable, what did it consist in? If she did not seek to restore traditional non-naturalist art, what was she after? The thrust of her argument makes that clear: it was the moral idea which 'must appeal to the Indian heart in an Indian way, [and] convey some feeling [that is] immediately comprehensible'.[79]

The appeal of a national style lay in its lofty content. Here, each of the salon paintings demonstrated a moral virtue. *Saint Geneviève Watching Over Paris* by the Frenchman Puvis de Chavannes was 'the finest expression of the civic spirit in modern art'. Richter's *Queen Louise Appearing Before Napoleon*, 'a noble and beautiful woman, a queen full of love of people and country, strong amidst reverse, sweet and patient under poverty', celebrated patriotism. Less clear is why Guido Reni's *Beatrice Cenci* also qualified. A Victorian favourite, it was a poem by Shelley, a photograph by Julia Margaret Cameron and had moved Dickens. Was it a 'feminist' symbol of fortitude, as displayed by this victim of incest?[80]

Nivedita's lesson for budding artist-patriots was artistic decorum: what could and could not be represented. Art must reflect 'the ideal of nationality, with its overwhelming impulse of moral direction and ethical stability'. Since women embodied this ideal, Ravi Varma's women were unsuitable for national art, her prime example being *Śakuntalā* (Fig. 138). 'In a country in which that posture is held ill-bred [and nowhere is it decorous to stretch on the floor], every home contains a picture of a young woman lying full length on the floor and writing a letter on a lotus leaf', fulminated Nivedita. Nor did she spare the courting *Arjuna and Subhadrā* by Varma. Present Indians, she pointed out triumphantly, did not favour such a public display of intimacy. A superior ideal was the Madonna. The only painter since the Renaissance who had succeeded in capturing the nobility of motherhood, she wrote, was P. A. J. Dagnan-Bouveret, a French salon celebrity. Again, it was the chaste mother in Abanindranath's *Bhārat Mātā* (Mother India), that moved her, 'as she appears to the eyes of Her children . . . eternally virgin . . .'. In her modest homespun sari, she personified the motherland in her Bengali incarnation. Here was decorum: woman as the virgin mother rather than a temptress.[81] Another perfect expression of this was Dhurandhar's *Steps to Devotion*. He was eulogised 'for the awe and rapture with which the artist regards the womanhood of his

motherland, and he fully convinces the beholder of the right to his worship', a picture full of correct piety, though containing some 'technical' faults.[82]

The celebrated Victorian image of evangelical piety was Jean François Millet's *Angelus*, Nivedita's favourite picture. The French master had this message for Indian artists: 'there is nothing here that did not come to Millet straight from nature. Everything in the scene is a reproduction of fact . . . not as by the photograph, but as by the poet, the seer. It is nature and fact interpreted by the mind and the heart of a great man. It is realism. But it is also idealism'.[83] Nivedita had read the German art historian, Wilhelm Lübke, who considered the Frenchman, Millet and Jules Breton, 'two painters of peasant life, who unite death of sentiment, truth of expression, simple naturalness, and broad, free handling of their subject, in a result of rare power'.[84]

Nivedita chose the above paintings in order to offer object lessons in idealism and cultural resistance, an idealism realised through artistic decorum. Her special gift to Bengali nationalists was pictorial evangelism, which inspired the landscapist Jamini Gangooly among others.

138 Ravi Varma: *Śakuntalā Patralikhan*, oleograph from his oil

The intervention of the Avalokiteśvara

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy's Arts and Crafts credentials made him an ideal exponent of *swadeshi* nationalism as cultural resistance to the industrial society. His pronouncements sprang from an astounding self-assurance, as evident in a letter to a friend:

> I want to serve not merely India but humanity, and to be as absolutely universal as possible – like the Avalokiteśvara.★[85]

A 'cyclopean' giant in the Indian cultural revival, Coomaraswamy totally identified with the cause that he espoused at each stage of his life. Widely held as the finest scholar of Indian art, his eloquent defence of tradition was listened to with rapt attention by Indian nationalists and European critics of progress, notably C. R. Ashbee, Eric Gill, Walter Crane and other followers of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Arguably the only Platonist of our century, he was described by *Modern Review* as an 'uncompromising reactionary', more in compliment than in criticism.[86] Appearing at a time that western values were being questioned, he combined the best and the worst of that era. The brilliance of his wide-ranging discourses occasionally led to excesses; yet there was much that endured.

Mutu Coomaraswamy, his aristocratic Tamil father from Ceylon, married Elizabeth Clay Beeby, from a wealthy Kent family, while in England. A friend of Disraeli, Mutu moved with ease in high circles in Victorian Britain. In his son Ananda, born in England, the academic geologist yielded to the Indian nationalist, leading to the keeper of Indian art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Yet, these three phases of his career existed in 'hermetic compartments', each phase severing all links with the previous one.[87]

His brief involvement with India is scarcely remembered but the years 1909–13 were as important for Coomaraswamy as they were for *swadeshi* nationalism. Arriving from London, he was a guest of the Tagores in Calcutta. Coomaraswamy plunged headlong into the national education movement, addressing the Dawn Society on national art with the aid of a magic lantern, then a novel practice. Coomaraswamy drove home Havell's message with ferocity, the prophet's mantle resting securely on his shoulders. When Coomaraswamy's *Essays in National Idealism* (1911) came out, *The Dawn* hailed it as marking a new era in Indian nationalism. A romantic conservative, Coomaraswamy aimed at reviving 'the true Hindu ideals', greeting women's emancipation and feminist opposition to *satī* with disdain. The savant's diagnosis of the national *angst* as a Hindu one was symptomatic of the growing exclusion of Muslims from the *swadeshi* movement.[88]

★ A name of the Buddha as epitomising universal compassion.

Coomaraswamy endorsed the cultural nationalist view that the *swadeshi* protest was not merely political, nor was it a personal vendetta against individual Englishmen; it was a spiritual struggle against an alien ideal. Artists with their deeper sense of political wrongs and their longing for self-realisation were the true nation-builders. Coomaraswamy took to task the political activists for their indifference to Indian art while they condemned Curzon. Curzon, he reminded them, had shown more concern for the national heritage than they ever did. Coomaraswamy had in mind Curzon's statement in 1900, 'I cannot conceive of any obligation more strictly appertaining to a Supreme Government than the Conservation of the most beautiful and perfect collection of monuments in the world'.[89] In *Art and Swadeshi* (1912), Coomaraswamy drew attention to the *swadeshi* shops that continued to sell English products, insisting that a genuine *swadeshi* outlook was the only alternative to colonialism. Within a decade, Gandhi was to base his *satyāgraha* on a similar rejection of western values, with the difference that his cultural resistance did not eschew political activism.[90]

Coomaraswamy traced the collapse of Indian taste to the art schools, those factories for producing effete art. There was the embarrassing problem of Ravi Varma however, the academic artist who won the hearts of thousands, simple and sophisticated. A demolition job on the hero of academic art was called for. Confessing an ignorance of his works in the original, Coomaraswamy accused Varma of pandering to public weakness for the sentimental and the comprehensible. This was elucidated with two contrasting images of the epic heroine, Sītā. Varma's *Sītā in Exile* was a woman bullied by her captor, while Abanindranath's was the 'embodiment of a national ideal'. The Keralan painter was guilty of a gross, physical treatment of symbolic subjects. In the case of the goddess Sarasvatī for instance:

> the lotus seat . . . essentially an abstract symbol . . . is represented as a real flower . . . [one wonders] how the stalk can be strong enough to support a full grown woman . . . I say 'woman' advisedly because Ravi Varma's divinities, in spite of their many arms, are very human, and often not very noble human types. At best the goddesses are 'pretty', a stronger condemnation of what should be ideal religious art it would be hard to find.[91]

Varma's Sarasvatī does not in fact sit on a lotus, but this minor detail got lost in the force of nationalist rhetoric. The eminent critic acknowledged Varma's Indian themes as the first steps towards national art, but an 'opportunity ill used'. Had the westerniser been more imaginative, his influence would have been that much greater. The works in short lacked decorum. Coomaraswamy's 'decorum' had a different ring to Nivedita's: the treatment should be commensurate with the subject chosen; thus the unrestrained melodramas of Varma were inappropriate for the sacred

epics. Playing with local colours (Kerala and Maharastra) and lacking in Indian feeling, the paintings seldom reached true national heights. His gods and heroes, cast in a common mould, found themselves in situations for which they lacked dignity. Since the national ideal demanded the treatment of noble subjects with dignity, Varma's paintings perpetrated the ultimate debasement of heroic and ideal types.[92]

Varma's popularity was not held against him. Coomaraswamy blamed it on the spectrum of Indian taste 'from the Raja whose palace built by the London upholsterer or imitated from some European building is furnished with vulgar superfluity and uncomfortable grandeur, to the peasant clothed in Manchester cottons of appalling hue and meaningless design'.[93] For this corruption of sensibility, Coomaraswamy pointed his finger at colonialism. It replaced hand-woven textiles with Manchester fabrics, grafted European buildings onto the cities, imposed art schools on craftsmen and, in a final betrayal, perpetuated a century of false education.

Pan-Asianism, Okakura and *swadeshi* art

Finally, Pan-Asianism, the Eastern form of the romantic ideology against progress, had a direct impact on Bengali artists in their perception of *swadeshi* art as oriental rather than Indian. By the end of the century, art teachers had begun to use oriental art to mean 'non-academic' art. But if *swadeshi* artists had tentatively accepted their art as oriental, they were thrilled to discover similar developments in Japan. With Okakura's arrival in Calcutta in 1902, they made common cause with Japanese artistic revival.

The processes of westernisation in Japan and India are comparable. This is significant since Japan was not spared European cultural dominance despite its political independence. In the last century, Japanese artisans were absorbed into industries, leading to social upheavals. Pragmatic reasons led Japanese artists to adopt illusionism and oils. The Japanese wished to master western technology, if only to avoid the fate of India and China. The Industrial Art School in Tokyo opened in 1876 under the Italian artist, Antonio Fontanesi. This was the Meiji era, a period of aggressive westernisation, when the educated were embarrassed to admit interest in Japanese art. The fashion for oils forced leading Edo artists 'to decorate fabrics and porcelain for export overseas. Some made a living painting pictures on fans'.[94]

In the 1880s, traditional culture began to regain lost ground, assisted by the American, Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908), and his Japanese disciple Kakuzo Okakura Tenshin (1862–1913). Fenollosa read philosophy and art at Harvard, where he discovered Carlyle and Ruskin. While teaching western philosophy in Japan, he discovered the ancient Japanese heritage.

His Pan-Asianist journal *Golden Age* held up Asian spirituality as an antidote to European commercialism and materialist Renaissance art. The activities of Fenollosa and Okakura remind us of Havell and Abanindranath.[95]

Okakura Tenshin was descended from a Samurai family that had taken up trade; the Brahmin Tagores had entered the modern business world. Okakura had a Christian missionary and Buddhist education. A student of Fenollosa at the university, Okakura joined him in documenting the Buddhist art of Japan, tracing it back to Ajanta. Their artistic revival was publicised in Okakura's influential magazine *Kokka*. In 1882 a bitter struggle broke out between Okakura and the pro-western faction. In 1888, as director of the imperial art academy, Okakura banned instruction in western art and the state withdrew its support of academic painters. In the Kyoto show of 1893, the leading oil painters failed to sell a single picture. However, Okakura's victory was a pyrrhic one. In 1898, he was ousted by the pro-West faction, a development Okakura did not fail to publicise in *The Studio*; westernisation, he claimed, had gone too far in Japan. He formed the rival 'Nihon Bijutsuin' (Japan Art Academy) with the dissidents.[96] He also widened the 'Pan-Asian' struggle by enlisting the support of likeminded Asians, Swami Vivekananda and the Tagores.

The challenge to western art teaching in Japan and India followed a chain of events. Theosophy, Slavophilism, and Arts and Crafts, had loosened Asian fatalism about European supremacy. Vivekananda projected Asia as the voice of religion, even as Europe was that of politics.[97] Havell, Fenollosa and Okakura came to accept 'spirituality' as an exclusively Asian virtue. In this heyday of Hegelian *Zeitgeist*, nations, cultures and races were seen in terms of their unique essences. Matthew Arnold coupled the feminine Celt and the masculine Teuton, Yeats contrasted 'masculine' empires and their 'feminine' subjects. *The Edinburgh Review* made a less flattering distinction – the intellectual West and the emotional East, adding with a hint of irony: 'The worth to the world of the Indian spiritual instinct is a matter beyond calculation'.[98] A tendency to see in terms of polarity, which appealed to critics of progress, became enshrined in Pan-Asianism.

The Pan-Asian spiritual–material polarity had a precedent in Romanticism, which thrived on the opposition between emotion and reason. Romantics, who saw the Age of Reason as fragmenting consciousness, idolised the 'harmonious' medieval community. Slavophiles too wished to replace individualism with 'the wholeness of spirit'.[99] These earlier contrasts reappeared as a spiritual/material one, as the spectre of the machine haunted the mid-century. The classic criticism of industrialism was Tönnies's concepts of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (association), a living organism versus an artificial creation based on

contract. Birdwood's own world was divided into henchmen of the Moloch (Manchester) and votaries of the Spirit.[100]

The reasons for the favourable reception of Pan-Asianism in the West are not far to seek. Even though concepts like the Orient or 'the oriental mind' were less a product of Asian consciousness than of western stereotyping, they nevertheless provided a powerful focus of Asian aspirations. The perceived difference between Europe and Asia helped forge Asia-wide links which had enduring aspects. Tagore's school at Santiniketan encouraged the teaching of Asian cultures and the regular exchange of artists and scholars. Finally, despite the finality of the adage, 'East is East and West is West', Pan-Asianists did believe in the meeting of the two, though not as imagined by Kipling. Fenellosa dreamed of 'marrying' the spiritual, feminine Japan with the materialist, masculine Europe; the two halves would join in a higher world order. Vivekananda, in a true flight of Hindu syncretism, dreamed of a universal religion led by India. *The Religion of Man*, a late piece by Rabindranath, distilled his universal humanism. In 1901, when Tagore made the expected contrast between Hindu and European minds, he was heartened to read of a similar defence of China emanating from the mainland. Only later did he discover that its author was the Englishman G. L. Dickinson.[101]

Okakura arrived in Calcutta on 6 January 1902, intending to study Buddhist art in the original and to take Vivekananda with him to Japan. But the monk died that year. Okakura's *Ideals of the East*, published in 1903, was widely welcomed by Indian nationalists: he was the bearer of a Pan-Asian mission to unite Asia against western imperialism.[102]

Rabindranath's nephew Surendranath, who was Okakura's host, has left us a delightful pen portrait of the savant. Okakura was solemnity itself, demanding, 'and what are you going to do for your country against the western capitalist mammon?' Suren could only mumble a feeble answer.[103] In her preface to *The Ideals*, Nivedita described India as the source of Asian unity in Buddhism, which was also 'the vast synthesis known as Hinduism, when received by a foreign consciousness'. Okakura, she said, showed Asia not 'as the congeries of geographical fragments that we imagined, but as a united living organism, each part dependent on all the others, the whole breathing a single complex life'.[104] Okakura described Japanese art as a product of Asian culture, a continent sustained by Indian religion and Chinese learning. When India's inspiration dried up, it led to the impoverishment of Japanese art. The identification of Vedic philosophy by Havell as the source of Asian art was in a similar vein. The Japanese victory in 1905, the year of the Partition of Bengal, caused a *frisson* among the bhadralok. An Asian nation had defeated Russia, a European power, however ramshackle. Okakura addressed his 'Brothers and Sisters of Asia' on Japan's awakening after the colonial 'night of Asia' (the volume was published in London). Unlike

many Japanese intellectuals who dismissed India as a subject nation, he paid a warm tribute to her for providing Vedic ideals that cemented Asian unity. His *Heart of Heaven* argued again that the art that flowed from India to China was not an isolated phenomenon. His ideal Asian thinker was the scientist Jagadish Bose, who sought the underlying unity of the animal, vegetable and mineral worlds.[105]

Okakura and Nivedita left a indelible impression on Abanindranath, reinforcing his art movement as 'oriental' rather than Indian in its war against the western malaise. The West would never comprehend that creation was not imitation, Okakura assured him. Okakura, with his knowledge of classical Chinese, must have known the Chinese painter Xie He's famous precepts. But significantly, his own six principles of art were not elaborated until after his arrival in Calcutta. This was when he learned from Abanindranath of a similar Indian doctrine, *Saḍaṇga* (Six Limbs of Painting), as part of a commentary on the *Kāma Sūtra*. The apparent affinities between Chinese and Indian ideas left Okakura in no doubt about the flow of influence from India to the Far East. In 1915, Abanindranath published his own reading of *Saḍaṇga*, which he duly compared with Xie He's canons.[106]

The differences between Okakura's principles and the *swadeshi* doctrine are minor. Here I take only the similarities, especially those that aimed at reconciling the Japanese tradition with the western. Nivedita saw Okakura as a Japanese William Morris, his students as artists who 'attempt to possess themselves of a deep sympathy and understanding of all that is best in the contemporary art movements of the West, at the same time that they aim at conserving and extending their national inspiration'.[107] Okakura urged his pupils to unite the best of East and West, old and new, which were also Abanindranath's unstated aims. Historicism dominated *nihonga* (nationalist) art. At the 'Nihon Bijutsuin', Okakura stressed the importance of the past, while not neglecting artistic progress. Most important, whatever was taken from the West or from the past must blend with artistic personality. Although style was important, 'originality counts for even more'. Freedom and individuality kept 'the soul free'.[108] Nothing was more alien to traditional Japanese art than this assertion of artistic individualism. The *swadeshi* doctrine also quietly absorbed progress and individualism.

Okakura's last appearance in Calcutta was in 1913 when he journeyed to the ancient temple of Konarak with Abanindranath. This last visit was touched with melancholy that presaged his imminent death. Committed to Pan-Asian ideals, he returned to general neglect in Japan and the outright hostility of pro-western artists. There are his letters to Priyambada Debi Banerjee, a widowed niece of Rabindranath, with whom he had formed a romantic attachment. His epitaph addressed to her expresses a mood of quiet resignation:

When I am dead,
Beat no cymbals, no banners display,
Deep in pine-leaves on a lonely shore,
Bury me quietly – her poems on my breast
. . .[109]

On this visit Okakura is said to have remarked, 'When I was here ten years ago, there was hardly any contemporary art. Now I can see the promise. Perhaps when I come after another ten years, I would see much achievement'.[110] The shadow of the departed friends, Nivedita and Okakura, fell on Abanindranath's essay in *Bhārati*:

> to grasp how this ability to adapt showed itself in ancient times we need to discuss Asiatic art. In other words, it is essential to conduct a comparative study of the traditions stretching from Turkey to Japan, from the northern limits of the Tartar kingdoms of China at one end to the southern ocean at the other. Then we must turn our attention to the manner in which Buddhist art had left its mark in a glorious unity of Asiatic art . . . If we visit China, or Japan, or the Turkish desert, we will find traces of inspiration from Indian relief sculpture. Wherever Indian art travelled, it left its imprint, and yet never despoiling the art of that country.[111]

In other words, Indian cultural hegemony was not attended with 'exploitation', as was the case with European colonialism.

8 *HOW THE PAST WAS SALVAGED BY* SWADESHI *ARTISTS*

The first to raise the standard of revolt was Abanindranath; he was not merely a rebel but a constructive genius . . . he sums up in himself . . . all that is good, beautiful and true in his country's art: its mysticism, its symbolism, its idealism . . . [and] the sublime spirituality of his race . . . as a teacher and founder of a new movement in India . . . he will be longest remembered . . .

Contemporary Indian Painters, G. Venkatachalam, n.d.

THE ERA OF ORIENTALISTS

The Bengal Renaissance: portrait of a culture

Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951), the leader of the first nationalist art movement in India, the Bengal School, was from an aristocratic family that was in the forefront of the Bengal Renaissance, the cultural movement associated with Calcutta. The birth of the city, the Raj capital until 1911 and the first home of Indian nationalism, was somewhat unpropitious. Situated in the vaporous swamps of Bengal, it attained eminence only after 1757 as the seat of British power. An early Governor-General, Warren Hastings, became keen to attract Indians to the city. He wished to create a demand for British products and provide 'the means of conveying to the natives a more intimate knowledge of our customs and manners and of conciliating them to our policy and government'.[1]

Some of the first Indian inhabitants of Calcutta were the trading partners of the British, the merchant princes who lived in Neoclassical mansions and collected European art. The imperial bureaucracy soon required Bengalis in its lower echelons, who formed a numerous class of clerks. Labourers were required for building work and road surfacing as the city expanded rapidly. Also came palanquin bearers, coachmen, washermen, milkmen, water-carriers, sweepers and other menial workers, who settled in ramshackle shanties. The streets of Calcutta

echoed to the sounds of itinerant tradesmen, palanquin bearers, mendicants, jugglers and street musicians.[2]

As the city grew in a higgledy-piggledy fashion, Chowringhee, the elegant central area, came to be occupied by Europeans. In the north, where Indians lived, the narrow, squalid lanes were a striking contrast to the handsome mansions of the *abhijāt* families (the Tagores of Jorasanko, the Debs of Sobhabazar, the Sinhas of Jorasanko, the Dattas of Hatkhola and the Malliks of the Marble Palace) that overlooked them. These Palladian edifices were enlivened by multicoloured stucco decorations. Their *porte-cochères* led into the house through a flight of marble steps and spacious doors framed in Classical columns, while colonnaded verandas with ironwork decoration surrounded the central courtyard. Some of the houses enjoyed a menagerie. The graceful life inside was hidden from the view of the street outside.

Racial segregation of the early period was harder to maintain in the expanding city. Europeans were regularly invited by the leading families to the Durga Puja, the major Hindu festival, where they watched the *nautch* (Indian dance). Wealthy Bengalis began moving to Chowringhee as they adopted western manners. However, the relationship between the two communities was not always smooth. The British regarded Calcutta as their city and the growing numbers of Bengali *babus* as a nuisance to put up with. Parallel with the European community flourished the bhadralok society; this made for rivalries, occasionally erupting, as during the 'Black Acts' agitations.[3]

Calcutta was unusual in some ways in developing a cohesive culture from the outset. This was not so easy for cosmopolitan Bombay with its thriving but diverse communities (Gujarati, Marathi, Jewish, Parsi, Catholic and Muslim). English education offered Bengalis not merely an entry to the imperial bureaucracy; it also inspired the Bengal Renaissance. This intellectual movement, which thrived on the uncoupling of wealth from birth, was a product of colonial dialogue. The strength of the bhadralok lay in their ambiguous status in Indian society: the new zamindars, the 'Pirali' Brahmins and the castes with low ritual status produced some of the finest minds of modern India. The greatest example in our time of this phenomenon is *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, whose contribution to modern culture had much to do with new Jewish professional groups that did not belong to the traditional dominant classes. Modernism, as Shorske argues, was a denial of the authority of history, a cardinal feature of Viennese culture. The very fact that the bhadralok had less of a stake in the dominant tradition enabled them to view the past and the present with a fresh eye. The energy released by the colonial encounter led to an outburst of literary activity in Bengal. The new spirit owed to the power of ideas. It developed a special pride in the mother tongue, diffused through books. As *Samāchār Darpan*, a missionary organ, remarked in 1833, 'In the last decade printing presses have proliferated to the extent

that their owners are vying with each other to bring out inexpensive but well-printed books'.[4]

By 1829, the plethora of Bengali-owned newspapers brought public opinion to maturity by debating social, cultural, and eventually political questions. In the 1880s, Anglo-Indian grumblings could be heard that the 'Bengalee Baboos now rule public opinion from Peshawar to Chittagong', while a more sympathetic opinion put it, to 'their honour, be it said, they have long been the leaders of public opinion in India. It is they who first formed it; it is they who chiefly sustain it. In them we perceive an amount of active patriotism and genuine earnestness not met with in any other Indian nationality'.[5]

The era of controversies commenced in the late eighteenth century with Rammohun Roy's challenge to the orthodox Hindus as well as their detractors, the Christian missionaries. Dissent grew more intense under the charismatic Indo-Portuguese teacher, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809–31). Derozio's precocious brilliance led to his appointment at the university at only 18. The first Indian debating society was founded by him, creating an environment of critical enquiry. His pupils were the legendary 'Young Bengal'. Admirers of Tom Paine, they mocked Brahmos for their faint-hearted attacks on orthodoxy. With the *insouciance* of extreme youth, they drank alcohol and ate beef, forbidden to the Hindus. Such behaviour brought swift reprisals on Derozio. Forced to resign by influential Hindus, his spirited defence was a token of his unusual courage. Within the year the young teacher was dead but his memory was cherished by his students, the Young Bengal.[6]

The intellectual atmosphere of Calcutta is captured by the Scottish missionary, Alexander Duff:

> New societies started up with the utmost rapidity in every part of the native city. There was not an evening in the week, on which one, two or more of these were not held . . . Indeed, the spirit of discussion became a perfect mania; and its manifestation, both in frequency and variety, was carried to a prodigious excess.[7]

Derozio's pupils founded the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge in 1838, where discourses on politics and society were the order of the day. It had been preceded by the Ātmiya Sabhā (1815), the Gauriya Sabhā (1823), the Brahmo Samāj (1828), the Dharma Sabhā (1830), and was succeeded by the Tattvabodhini Sabhā (1839) and Society for the Promotion of National Glory, to name the most prominent ones.

But debates were not the sole Bengali preoccupation. Public entertainments were part of Calcutta life and none more so than the modern theatre, which rivalled the traditional *jātrā*. In the late eighteenth century, not only did the resident Europeans produce amateur plays in Calcutta but European actors and opera singers normally stopped in the city en route to the Far East and Australasia. In 1795, an enterprising Russian,

Gerasim Lebedeff, produced Bengali plays in Calcutta but this met with limited success. By 1831, however, amateur theatricals rivalled the traditional performances of Indian classical music and dance in wealthy Bengali homes. Social satires and burlesques emerged as Bengali favourites. The first Bengali social drama, *Kulinkulasarbashya*, was staged in 1857, while the political play, *Nildarpan*, was produced in 1872. Dinabandhu Mitra's play, published in 1860 to expose the indigo planters' oppression of the Bengal peasants, signalled the arrival of nationalism and political censorship.[8]

A taste for things European was a striking feature of this urban culture. Calcutta being the capital, a western lifestyle spread rapidly among the bhadralok, with shops offering a variety of imported articles. Victorian architecture, sculpture, painting, clothes and furniture became the wherewithal of gracious living among the bhadralok. Typical was the large collection of academic sculptures and paintings made by the Malliks of the Marble Palace. Wealthy families often bought up the entire household effects of the British returning home. We have, for instance, an early notice announcing the sale of Warren Hastings' personal effects: crockery, furniture, paintings, prints, carpets and a musical organ among others. *Curry and Rice* described the native potentate whose palace was crammed with 'destitute' objects left behind by the British, to which he obligingly gave shelter.[9]

Such a steady accumulation of European objects in colonial cities helped transform elite taste. At the same time the elite created their own culture quite distinct from the expatriate one. The Tagores were an example of the new graceful Victorian ambience of Calcutta. Indeed, of the families that set the tone of this new culture, few were as versatile as they. The Tagore fortunes were founded by Dwarkanath. 'In a British-dominated business world, a Bengali Brahmin indeed stood at the pinnacle of power', writes a recent historian of this pioneer entrepreneur.[10] Dwarkanath moved with ease in English circles and was received by Queen Victoria. A fervent admirer of western values, Dwarkanath dreamed of creating a cosmopolitan, multiracial Calcutta, an ambition that was thwarted by creeping racism.

Dwarkanath, known in the polite society of Europe as the 'Prince' for his lavish lifestyle, commissioned in 1844 a life-size marble statue of 'Proserpina' from John Gibson, the English sculptor, then living in Rome. Dwarkanath wrote to his son about its imminent arrival: 'The Southampton Mail goes to-morrow, and I send you . . . a large box containing a Marble Statue by *Gibson*, most valuable, which keep in the office godown in the driest place until the Gallery is added to the Garden House . . .'[11] The gallery belonged to his sumptuous Belgatchia villa outside Calcutta, which also contained a summerhouse, a lake with row-boats, and tame elephants. Emily Eden, the haughty sibling of the Proconsul, Lord Auckland, confided approvingly of his taste in a letter:

> Dwarka Nath Tagore, a very rich native, has asked us to go and see his villa. He is a follower of Rammohun Roy, speaks good English, has built a regular English villa, with billiard-room etc., and fitted it up with statues and pictures, and Copley Fieldings, and Prouts, and French China etc., and he asked us to name a day on which to see it . . . [there are] quantities of beautiful pictures and books . . .[12]

A collateral branch of the Tagores boasted another sizeable gallery of European art in their 'English-castle' mansion built in 1895, with the centre tower resembling that of Windsor Castle. Their collection was begun with the expertise of the painter, George Chinnery, early in the nineteenth century. It was expanded in the 1880s and final purchases were made when the government art gallery was broken up in 1905. Sassoferrato's *Marriage of St Catherine*, Lord Northbrook's gift to the gallery, was among them.[13]

Bengali literature bears witness to the Victorian invasion not only of the leading homes but also of average well-to-do ones. In the novel *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864), Bankim Chatterjee describes the living quarters of a wealthy family as consisting of English escritoires, Indian country boxes, paintings of the Hindu goddesses, and the 'exquisite conception of the Virgin and Child might itself be seen adorning the chamber the inmates of which had little knowledge what the artist's genius and engraver's skill had strove to represent'.[14] Bankim, like many of his educated contemporaries, set great store by the powers of academic naturalism, which he felt eluded those who had not received an English education.

The climactic scene of his novel, *Bisha-Briksha* (The Poison Tree), takes place in the heroine's bedroom. Meticulously decorated in fashionable taste by the husband for his beloved wife, it is a reliable yardstick of gracious living of the age:

> At night, when everyone had retired, Nagendra went up to Suryamukhi's bedroom to sleep: to sleep or to weep? The room was spacious and exquisite. To Nagendra it was the sanctum of his happiness. He had built it with great care . . . it had a lofty ceiling and a floor of black-and-white chequerboard design in marble. The walls were decorated with multi-coloured flowers, fruits and foliage, with small birds pecking at the fruits. In one corner stood a bed of precious wood inlaid with ivory, while in another were a handsome mirror and wooden seats covered in expensive fabric. The walls contained pictures. They were not European; Nagendra and Suryamukhi had engaged a Bengali artist who had trained competently under an Englishman. One of the paintings in an expensive frame was based on [Kalidasa's] *Kumārasambhava* . . . Nagendra entered the room, gave a sigh and sank into a sofa.[15]

The thoroughly Victorian taste of the affluent bhadralok is evident not only in fiction but also in an essay by Balendranath. In this autobiographical piece the young critic describes the pictures in his living room as an

invitation to enter his private aesthetic world: he had covered the entire walls with his favourite works. There were Indian miniatures and popular prints and, surprisingly, a Japanese print. But in keeping with the prevailing taste, reproductions of academic art, especially French salon paintings of women, draped or otherwise, dominated the room. There were also Victorian genre scenes of the sentimental variety: children lost in a snowstorm; a tired hunter resting with his faithful dog by his side; a domestic scene with lovers; an old woman telling stories to children; a grandfather playing hide-and-seek with his grandchildren; the last kiss of a couple with the husband about to be crucified.[16]

The making of a leader

Abanindranath Tagore grew up in this milieu in an elegant mansion at Jorasanko. Tagore children enjoyed a degree of freedom not granted to an average Bengali child. The atmosphere in the household encouraged individual creativity. As Rabindranath wrote: 'Most of the members of my family had some gift – some were artists, some poets, some musicians, and the whole atmosphere of our home was permeated with the spirit of creation. I had a deep sense almost from infancy of the beauty of Nature . . .'. Although in the social sphere the Tagores were not radical, marrying their daughters early and within the caste, they were intellectually open-minded. The Tagores added a new romantic sensibility to the Bengal Renaissance, the greatest exponent of which was Rabindranath. Naturally Aban found his high school drab and regimented and persuaded his parents to let him complete his education at home. The brief, rather negative, school experience made him value liberal, creative education in later life. The first steps taken in drawing at the high school, such as copying objects drawn by the teacher, also left indelible traces in him. The teachers, products of the art school, deemed copying to be a prerequisite of good drawing.[17]

Since Aban was educated at home, the visual material in the house had a formative influence on him. He was surrounded with pictures of all kinds, mostly Victorian and almost all European. We must remember the effect these mass-produced images had on impressionable children. They appeared everywhere, on magazine covers, chocolate wrappers, biscuit tins, cigarette packets and children's annuals. In his case, *The Illustrated London News* aroused his first curiosity. His impressions of rustic cottages, he tells us, derived from English picture books. Not until he saw actual peasant dwellings on his first visit to rural Bengal did he realise how different they were from the ones known to him. Later, as a national artist, he made strenuous efforts to unlearn his childhood memories. But they survived on a subliminal level.[18]

What was the visual world of an affluent Bengali child like in the last

century? The house would be separated into two areas, the outer rooms for men and the inner quarters for women. The gender division of the living space found an echo in the language: English was current among men while women spoke in the vernacular. The outer section of a sophisticated household was furnished with European objects. There sahibs were entertained for business or pleasure and English was the normal language. The British trading partners of Dwarkanath regularly visited him at home. To entertain them he built an outer mansion, the *Baithak-khāna*. Here hung oil portraits of different members of the family in the manner of English stately homes. The 'Prince' regularly commissioned visiting European artists. He died before Aban was born, but as Aban recalled, one part of the mansion contained the chandeliers, silver candlesticks, bone china, hubble-bubbles, carpets and other objects from the days of Dwarkanath. Other members of the family brought back lacquer boxes, multi-storied ivory pagodas and other curios from their travels.[19]

But Indian pictures were not entirely absent in the household. They were confined to the women's quarters, which were strictly out of bounds to outsiders. The *abhijāt* family which had invited the Prince of Wales into its zenana in 1875 was widely criticised in Bengal. Caste rules were rigorously enforced in this section of a respectable household. Women, as upholders of traditional virtues, performed the daily rituals of Hinduism, which explains the sacred pictures in their quarters. Krishnanagar clay images were also displayed in glass cases, as was the practice of one of Aban's aunts. These little figures were prized in Calcutta and regularly sent by the government to international exhibitions. Aban's aunt also collected Calcutta Art Studio prints, traditional *pats* (scroll paintings) and needlework pictures. The *pats* whetted the child's appetite for Indian art.[20]

The gender division of living space began to break down once men adopted European habits. The Victorian atmosphere of the Tagore household is illustrated by an amusing anecdote. Nagendranath, Aban's great-uncle, could not tolerate the bare legs of tables, constantly urging his servants to cover them. Aban's father Gunendranath decorated a room in western style simply to please his mother. The Tagores were also the first to encourage women to learn English and appear in public. Aban's aunt went riding with her ICS husband to the consternation of Bengali society. Aban's grandfather painted in oils and his father spent some years at the art school. Drawing instruments, the hallmark of South Kensington, were kept at home. The new 'western' room contained oil paintings, marble-topped ebony tables, and precious objects from the West. A keen horticulturalist, Gunendranath built a conservatory next to his bedroom. Keeping up with contemporary fashion, he built a country villa on his own plan, which was visited by Sir Richard Temple. The garden was decorated in impeccable Victorian taste. Among items imported from abroad were two ornamental fountains: one with the metal figure of a

child with upraised arms; the other a bronze fountain, flanked by two life-size female slaves. Contemporary advertisements testify to the popularity of fountains with chained female figures. Gunendranath, like his grandfather Dwarkanath, prized Victorian marbles and ordered them from Britain (Fig. 139). But clearly fountains were his passion. Aban's nephew Jamini Gangooly recalled marvelling at a crystal fountain in the same villa.[21]

In Aban's childhood, one Victorian painting in particular cast a spell on him. Remarkably lifelike, it was of a young woman in a flowing skirt, a

Telegraphic Address
"METALS, CALCUTTA."

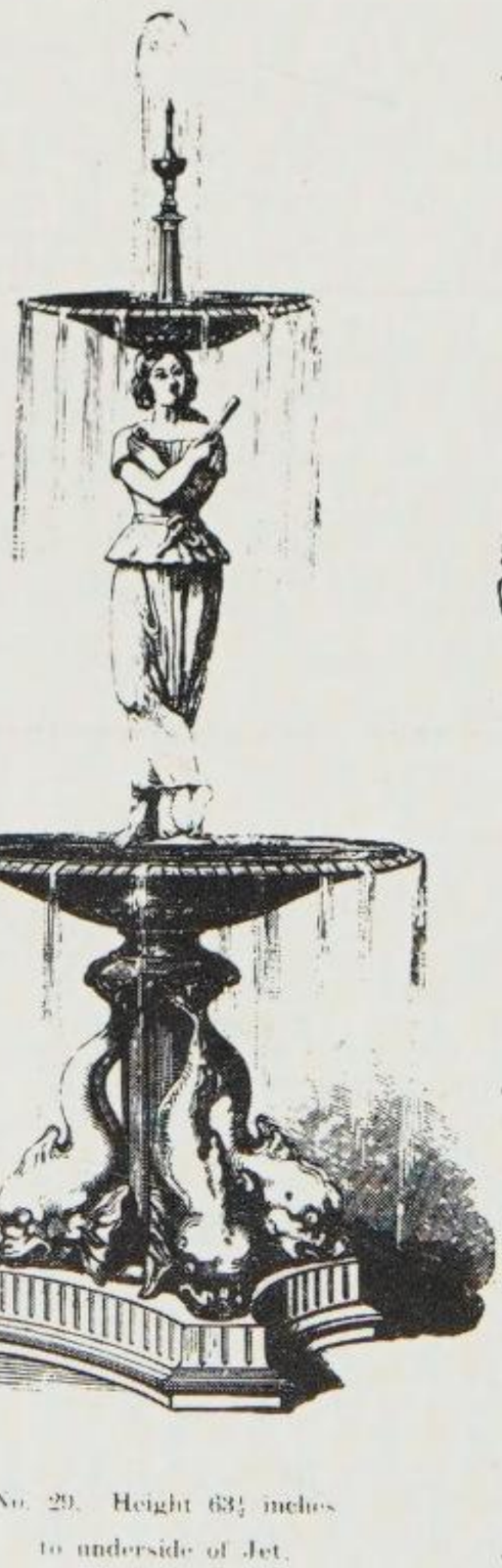
W. LESLIE & CO., CALCUTTA.

Telegraphic Address
"METALS, CALCUTTA."

BRONZED ORNAMENTAL CAST-IRON GARDEN FOUNTAINS.

BRONZED C. I. FIGURES.

"DOLPHIN AND MAID."



No. 29. Height 63½ inches to underside of Jet.

Rs. 220

A "STUDY."

ANDROMEDA.

Height 60 inches.

Andromeda, daughter of Cepheus, king of Aethiopia and Cassiopeia.

As her mother boasted that in beauty Andromeda excelled the Nereids, Poseidon sent a sea monster to ravage the country. The oracle of Ammon prescribed that Andromeda should be given up to the monster to save her country, but Perseus turned it to stone with the Gorgon's head, saved her, and afterwards married her. After death she was placed among the Stars. The story is told in Ovid's Metamorphoses.

Rs. 2,500 each.

"SLAVE."

No. 7. Height 74 inches to underside of Jet.

Rs. 275

Unless otherwise instructed we insure these goods against breakage in transit. Premium 5 per cent.

139 Decorative fountains imported from Britain in a nineteenth-century catalogue. *Andromeda*, the middle fountain, is inspired by the celebrated *Slave Girl* by the American sculptor Hiram Powers

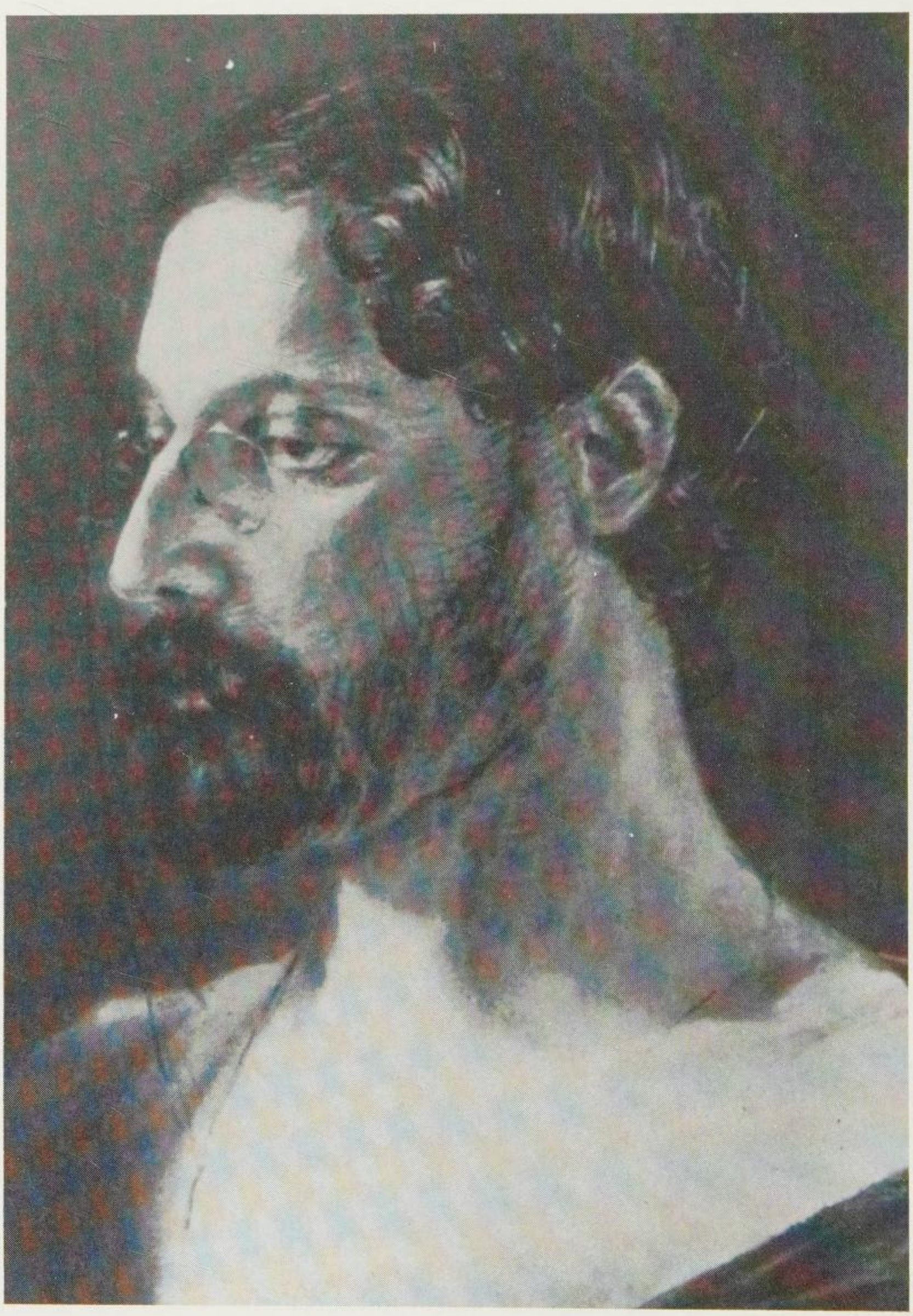
sleeveless blouse and a hat. She held a basket in her left hand and a dog by her right side. A napkin-covered bottle peeped out of the basket. The dog gazed at his mistress and she returned its gaze. Such themes of human interest moved him throughout his life. The child also took delight in watching artists in the Tagore entourage at work. Harish Chandra Haldar, a loyal retainer, regularly contributed drawings to *Bālak*, the Tagores' children's magazine. Haldar's figures recalled classical sources from art-school days. With the rise of Bengali amateur theatricals, the Tagores became playwrights and producers. Haldar often designed sets, an activity that Aban joined in. Once, writes Aban, a European 'scene' painter was engaged. He designed sets with a Kālī temple in the style of Ellora and a court scene based on Indian miniatures, reflecting the growing trend in historicism.[22]

When quite young, the magical years of Abanindranath came to an abrupt end with his father's early death. Though there was no pressing need to earn a living, his mother's wish made him toy between art and music. Abanindranath's first sketches were competent but unmemorable. He spent time illustrating his uncles' literary works in a Victorian idiom. The success of the sketches for *Swapna Prayān* by Dwijendranath in 1890 persuaded him to take up painting. He began private lessons in pastels with Olinto Ghilardi, the Italian art teacher, with an obligatory drawing of leaves. Taking the precepts of academic art seriously, the young student solemnly set aside a room with northern light as a studio. Abanindranath's charming account of his artistic career is full of such vivid, slightly ironic, self-deprecatory details.[23]

Much of his time was spent capturing likenesses of his uncles, including one of Rabindranath dated 1893 (Fig. 140). Abanindranath's immediate inspiration was his uncle, Jyotirindranath, who had succumbed to the lures of the fashionable science of phrenology (Fig. 141). Jyotirindra had the habit of taking the cranial measurements of his acquaintances before sketching their profiles. Admirers of his 'phrenological' profiles included the English painter, William Rothenstein. Some years before Ravi Varma had called on the Tagores at the suggestion of Ramananda Chatterjee, Varma's biographer. Abanindranath, who was away, never met the eminent painter, who is said to have remarked on the 'audacity' displayed in the young artist's work. Although interesting, the dabblings were not enough to turn Abanindranath into a professional artist. In this age of salon art, an artist worth his salt had to demonstrate his mastery in oils. Hence Aban and his nephew Jamini Gangooly engaged the English artist, Charles Palmer, to teach them oils.[24]

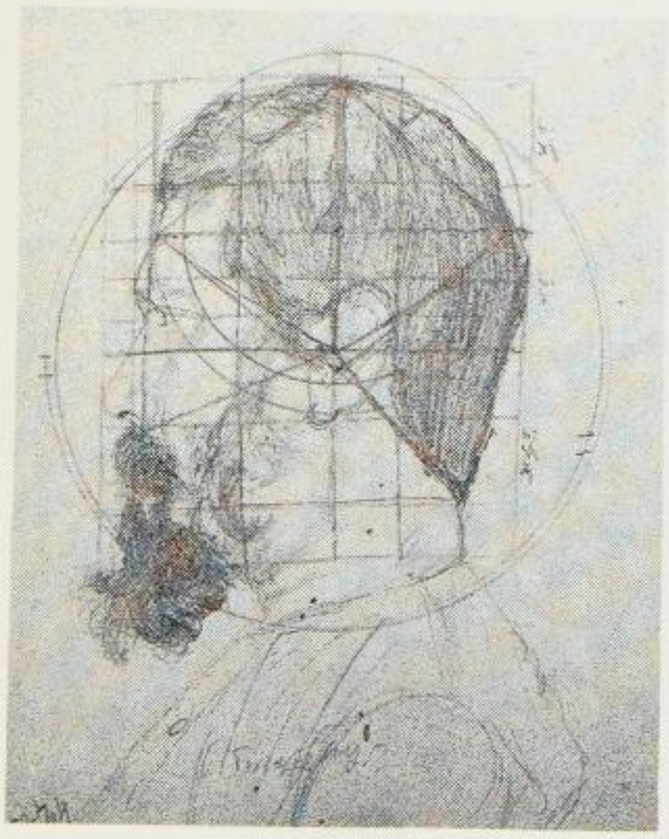
For life drawing, Palmer hired a young English soldier from neighbouring barracks as a nude model. On arrival, the youth began to take off his clothes in order to pose. Unaccustomed to figure drawing, Abanindranath grew alarmed and pleaded with him not to remove his undergarment. If the response was typical of the artist, one must

remember that nudes were still rare in art schools. After the dismal failure of the life class, Palmer tried to give him anatomy lessons. When Abanindranath was given a human skull to draw, he could not bear the object in front of him, imagining being attacked by countless unknown germs and literally falling ill at the very prospect. Is it possible that his squeamishness sprang from a subliminal fear of pollution – for after all the



140 Abanindranath Tagore: *Rabindranath Tagore*, pastel

141 *Below* Jyotirindranath Tagore: *Phrenological Portrait*, pencil, showing the use of a grid



Hindus regard the dead as ritually polluting? One is not sure but behind the humorous and understated description of these two episodes by Abanindranath is the impatience with rigid academic training. Unlike his nephew, Jamini Gangooly, Abanindranath constantly questioned such training, an intellectual restlessness foreshadowed in his schooldays.[25]

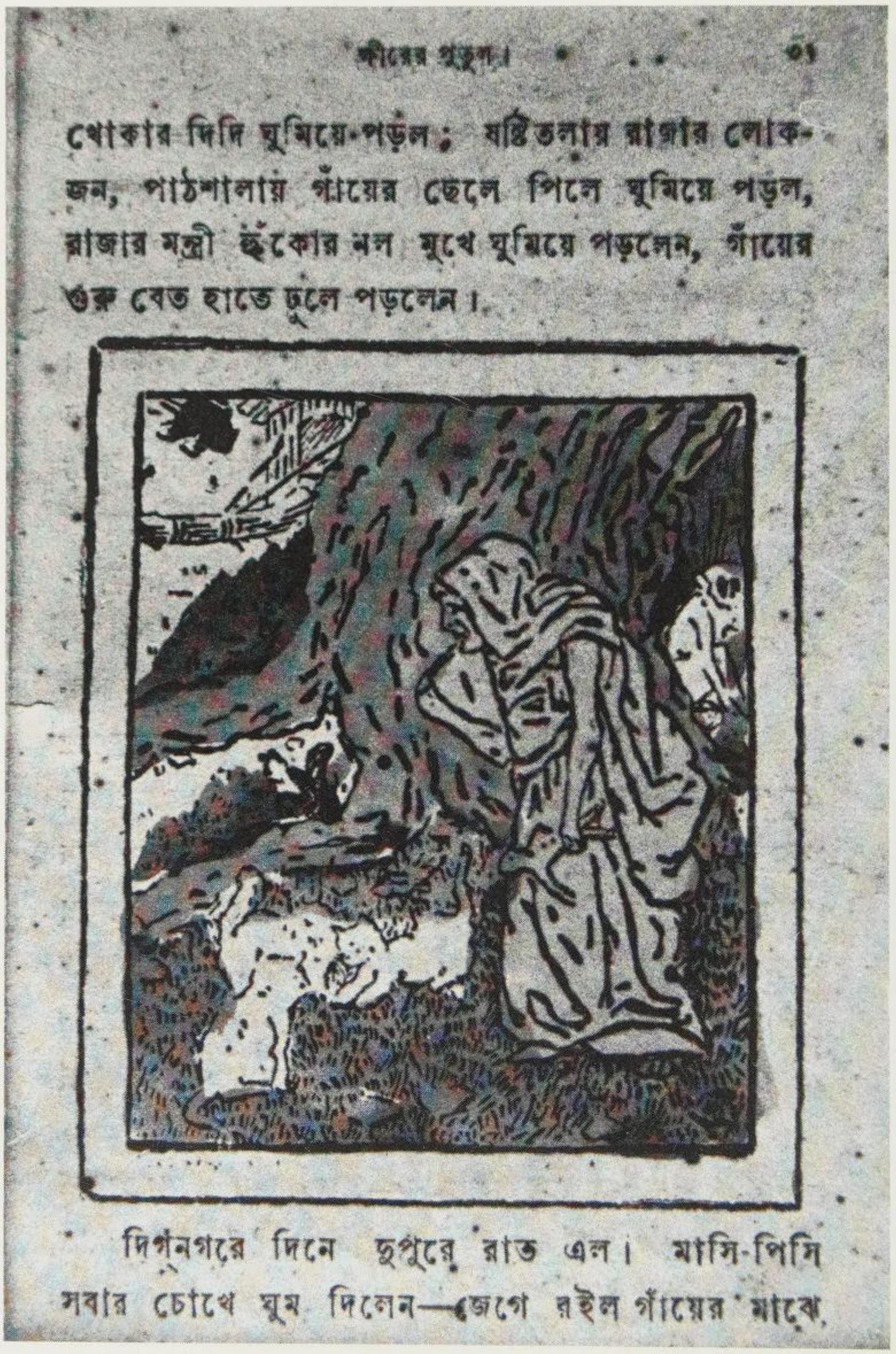
His family's involvement in the Hindu Mela made him acutely aware of the nationalist debates. On his visits to the Mela as a child he may have even seen Indian miniatures. But above all, he had the example of his uncle before him. A powerful exponent of *swadeshi* nationalism, in the 1880s, Rabindranath was at the forefront of the literary revival in Bengal. His early collection of poems, *Bhānusingher Padābali*, which adopted the manner of medieval Vaisnava poets, displayed a profound feeling for the idiom. Initially, critics were even taken in by Tagore's claim that he had discovered a genuine Vaisnava text. As for the nephew, if his response to academic art was lukewarm, he was having difficulties with finding genuine pre-colonial art. In that period, the architect of artistic revival was the salon artist, Ravi Varma; Aban's initiation into Indian art was through Varma's prints given by Rabindranath.[26]

In the 1890s, Abanindranath's progress continued in the direction of book illustration; of Rabindranath's play *Chitrāngadā* in 1892, and Kalidasa's *Abhijñān Śakuntalam* in 1895. But by far the most successful ones were of Abanindranath's own story, *Ksirer Putul* (1896) (Fig. 142). The fact that he was most comfortable with the small format eased his entry into the world of Indian miniatures. The turning point, however, was a copy of Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* (1845), hand-painted by an English family friend, Frances Martindale, in the English book illumination tradition. But Abanindranath was not unacquainted with Indian painting, even though he was not to see a Mughal masterpiece until his meeting with Havell. His cousin Balendranath wrote on Jaipur paintings and Abanindranath received an album of miniatures from his brother-in-law.[27]

Jamini Gangooly recalled Abanindranath's growing distaste for western techniques. The astute Palmer, who saw the drift of his pupil's interests, confided to Jamini, 'I had noticed all along that your uncle could not pull on with "life study" and the European principles of light and shade . . . It is a good sign that the artist's temperament revolts against all rigid rules and beaten tracks. Independence leads to personality in art'.[28] Yet, despite Abanindranath's resolution to turn to his Indian heritage, his earliest efforts at an indigenous style betrayed more Martindale than Indian miniatures. The heroine in his early *Sisir Abhisār* is simply a sari-wrapped European woman set in a winter landscape. It was only when Abanindranath showed Palmer several works on Jayadeva's *Gīta Govinda* (Fig. XXII) that the teacher felt relieved. This difficult student had at last found his direction. Palmer offered encouragement:

> Mr. Tagore, I should strongly advise you to proceed along this line and produce more pictures of a similar nature. These pictures have a character of their own. You require no studies from life any more. I shall be greatly pleased to see your work from time to time.[29]

The *Kṛṣṇa Līlā* paintings were the first hesitant steps towards an alternative expression, inspired by Vaisnava poetry. They were also the



142 Abanindranath Tagore: woodcut. A page from *Ksirer Putul* (Shasthi the goddess of fertility with cats)

first self-conscious use of devices from Indian miniatures, such as dividing the picture planes with open pavilions, marble columns and other architectural details. Aban applied gold leaf generously, a technique learnt from a traditional picture-framer. Though the flat style of the paintings marked a departure from his academic works, it lacked the fluidity of Rajput miniatures. Abanindranath's emaciated feminine beauty, reminiscent of the *fin-de-siècle* Symbolists, was also rather new, though she seemed to embody the *swadeshi* ideal of Indian spirituality. The move towards a new canon was also evident in Balendranath's 1899 essay where he imagined Śakuntalā to be a slim maiden, rather than Ravi Varma's 'well-nourished harem Śakuntalā' (Fig. 143).[30]

Abanindranath's feminine ideal startled his contemporaries, used to the opulent beauties of Ravi Varma and the Calcutta Art Studio. Sisir Ghosh (1840–1911), editor of the *swadeshi* newspaper, *Amrita Bāzār Patrikā*, and a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, rushed over to Jorasanko when he heard that a young Tagore had produced a fresh vision of Rādhā. On viewing her he was outraged:

> What have you painted? Is this the beautiful Rādhā with thin, graceless arms and legs? Her arms should be round and plump, her figure voluptuous. Are you not familiar with Rādhā's description in Vaisnava literature?[31]

Havell at the Calcutta Art School

While Abanindranath was groping towards an authentic expression, E. B. Havell arrived in Calcutta, determined to bring sweeping changes to the art school curriculum. His presence at the school from 1896 to 1906 was opportune, for it coincided with the heightening pitch of nationalism. Havell's first target in the school was the use of Classical antiques in teaching which perpetuated the worst habits of English art schools. 'There were no general classes for practical geometry, mechanical drawing and perspective. Oriental art was more or less ignored, thereby taking the Indian art students in a wrong direction', wrote Havell indignantly. He replaced antiques with examples of Indian art, though, significantly, life study was not disbanded. If anything, the students 'will be brought much more quickly to the direct study of nature and the human figure'.[32]

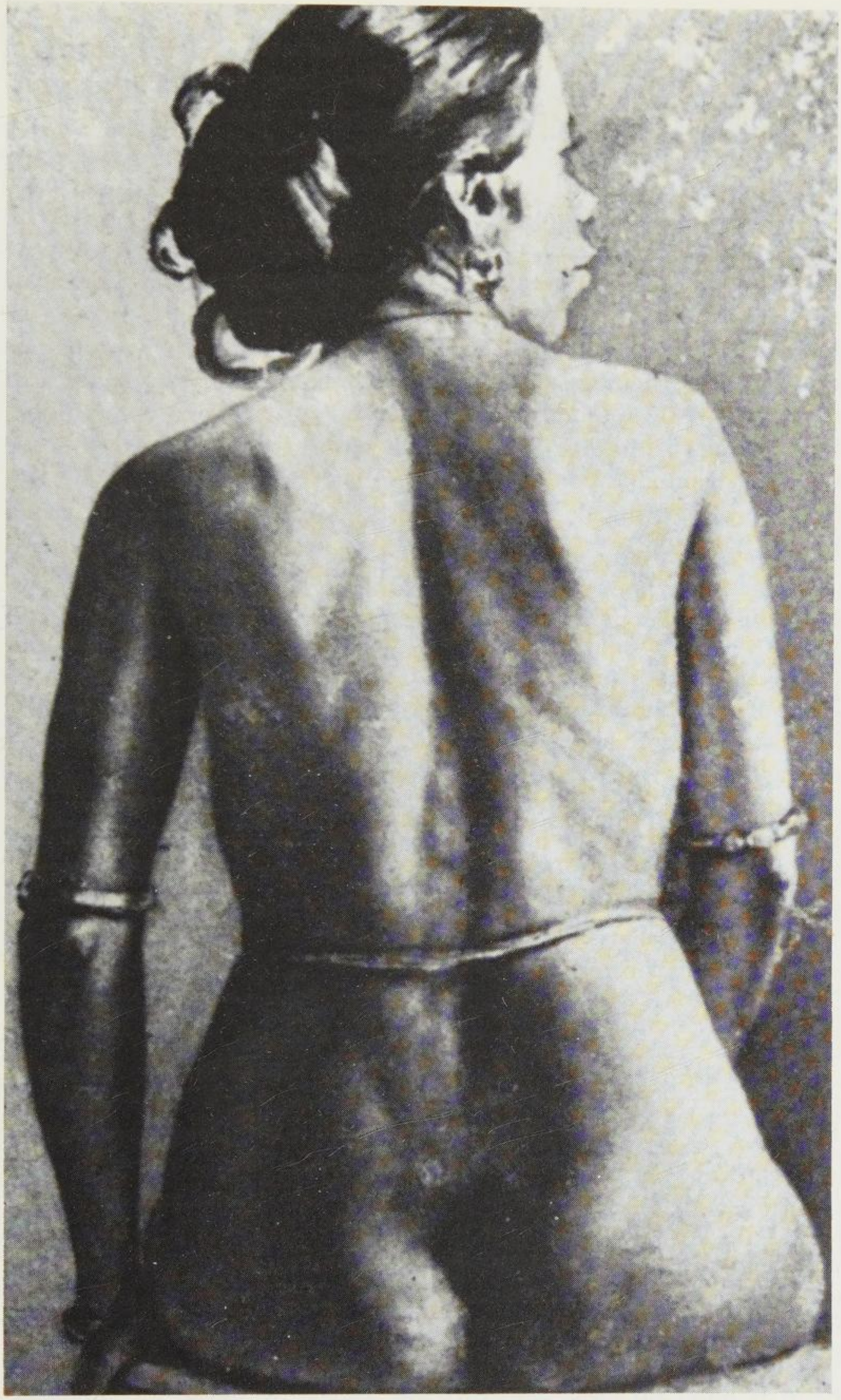
Havell's changes sparked the first student revolt within the school and uproar in the nationalist press without. He later mused about it:

> I abolished the 'antique' class in the school of art, and revised the whole course of instruction in that institution, making Indian art the basis of the teaching. The effect of this revolution was startling . . . The students left the school in a body, held mass meetings on the Calcutta 'maidan' and presented petitions to the Government, while the 'advanced' section of the

> Bengali press raged furiously against me. However, after I had lectured for a week to the minority of one on the school benches which had faith in me and in Indian art the wandering sheep returned to the fold'.[33]

The main offenders were promptly sent down, but their leader, Ranada Das Gupta (Fig. 144), showed his defiance by conducting a rival art class in the open air on the Maidan (the vast green in the centre of Calcutta). More

143 Ravi Varma: *Sāntanu and Matsyagandhā*, oil. The romance between a king and a fishergirl in the *Mahābhārata* offers Varma his distinctive treatment of the female figure



144 Ranada Prasad Das Gupta: *Nude*, charcoal

permanent accommodation was found for him in 1897 with funds from the Calcutta Corporation, which was by now firmly under the control of Bengali councillors. The rebel school was named The Jubilee Academy after Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.[34]

The scandal of the art school antiques refused to die. Atul Bose, a student at the school in 1910, picked up the current rumour that Havell had ordered the school antiques to be dumped in the adjacent lake. This apocryphal story demonstrates the strong passions aroused.[35] By the end of the last century, in addition to The Jubilee Art Academy, two private art schools, The Albert Temple of Science and School of Art, and The Indian Art School, promoted academic 'national' art. The last one was run by the early nationalists Shyamacharan Srimani and Manmatha Chakrabarty. Even though these two schools received no state subsidy, the teaching methods of The Albert Temple came under fire from the department of education for its inconsistency in 'using European casts, drawing books, and designs, in an institution which [prided] itself on being "Swadeshi".'[36]

While the bhadralok were sold on western naturalism, it was the government that condemned the private art schools for their lack of patriotism. Why did the students or the nationalist press cling so passionately to academic naturalism? The rebel academic painter Ranada Das Gupta waged a lonely war to assert his version of 'nationalist' art until his death in 1927. He was prepared to sacrifice a successful career rather than accede to Havell's reforms. In 1901 Ranada met Vivekananda, when the artist's morale was low; he described his own struggle and public indifference to 'art'. The monk comforted him with these words: 'paint the objects of everyday meditation of the Hindus by giving in them the expression of ancient ideals'.[37]

The colonial rulers were taken to uphold 'oriental' art. Raj paternalism sought to shelter perennial Indian culture from the ravages of progress. Thus Curzon, who demonstrated his concern for Indian antiquities with an important legislation, The Ancient Monuments Restoration Act of 1904, was sympathetic to Havell's measures. Havell for his part dismissed the rebellion as demonstrating the 'constitutional conservatism' of the Bengalis, regretting that the *swadeshi* movement was not yet formed. There were, however, deeper reasons for the conflict. Students were increasingly sucked into the vortex of political unrest. Secondly, traditional art played virtually no role in bhadralok lives, raised on Poynter and Leighton. Inevitably Havell's action was interpreted as a threat to artistic progress in India. Early nationalists were able to reconcile political resistance to the Raj with a faith in the absolute values of western art. But it is equally interesting that in modern constructions of national identity there is often no clear consensus on what constitutes an 'authentic' heritage. It largely depends on how a nationalist group actually perceives that heritage in relation to itself. In the case of many of the westernised

nationalists of the last century, they had yet to come to terms with India's artistic past.[38]

Havell's action deepened the rift between cultural nationalists and political activists. The latter wished to rid India of British rule but not reject western progress. The cosmopolitan Tagore circle on the other hand, which included Havell, Nivedita, Okakura and Coomaraswamy, preferred explorations of Indian cultural uniqueness to political power. In 1911, *The Statesman* appropriately named the Indian Society of Oriental Art, run by the Tagores, as

> the most truly Swadeshi organisation in India, since it aims not merely at the encouragement of Indian artists but at the revival of Indian ideals. In these efforts it has succeeded, for in the works of Abanindro Nath Tagore and his disciples Indian pictorial art has begun once more to delight the world. The revival has yet to penetrate the Philistinism of the Indian politician . . .[39]

Without pronouncing on the legitimacy of either position, since they were the two main currents of the nationalist movement, one can see how these differences created partisan controversies among nationalists on the nature of opposition to British rule.

The meeting of the Guru and his Chelā

Faced with a hostile reception from the Bengali public, Havell desperately needed an Indian ally who would be able to carry out his reforms. He found him in Abanindranath and their collaboration led to the 'national' art movement in Bengal. The meeting was possibly arranged through Abanindranath's aunt, the wife of Satyendranath, the first Indian ICS. The year must have been 1896, the year Havell started collecting Mughal art for the school. Later, in 1908, Havell wrote that 'the masterpieces I discovered were as much a revelation to [Abanindranath] as to the majority of Anglo-Indians'.[40] Indeed, one of his most enduring achievements was this superb collection made for the school. In 1897, three works of Mansur were acquired by Havell. 'Apart from their historic interest', stated the annual report of the school, 'these paintings show that in some branches of fine Art the Moghul artists reached a much higher degree of perfection than is generally supposed. They are invaluable as objects of study for native artists'.[41]

The Havell–Abanindranath partnership in the campaign for the new art was based on an instinctive bond between the Englishman and the Indian, the one active and the other reflective. Abanindranath acknowledged the older man as his 'guru', while the art teacher affectionately called him his 'collaborator'. There is little evidence that the Englishman gave formal lessons to Abanindranath. Nor was Havell's own *plein air*

style ever imposed on his students at the school. When Abanindranath met Havell, he already had a certain amount of formal training. Hence, when the art school report of 1902–3 described Abanindranath as 'a student of great original talent', it meant that he was a 'student of art', rather than a student at the school. Nonetheless, Abanindranath did regard himself as Havell's spiritual disciple in his quest for 'the lost language of Indian art'. Later he recalled with warmth the time they spent together. As he put it with charming modesty,

> there was none to compare with my guru Havell in appreciating Indian art. Every day for two hours we would sit in a quiet corner while he taught me about Hindu sculpture and painting. There were strict orders that we were not to be disturbed . . . I still think that had not Havell taken so much trouble to teach me to love Indian art, I would probably have remained in the dark and without an appreciation of the beauty of the art of my own land.[42]

The pioneers shared the pleasure of discovering Indian art. In 1908 Havell emerged as an authority on ancient Indian art. But in 1903 he had not yet found his feet in the subject, as is clear from an article in *The Studio*. The artists of Ajanta, he wrote in sympathy with mimesis, were capable of producing works based on the study of nature and so were able to overcome the 'restraint imposed by the rigid formalism of Hindu artistic canons'.[43] However, if Havell and Abanindranath discovered Hindu art together, the Englishman undoubtedly helped the Bengali painter discover Mughal art. Havell once gave him a magnifying glass to pick out the fine details of Mughal paintings. The impact of the dazzling skill of the Mughals on Abanindranath was immediate:

> Once I used this lens, my 'third eye', to scrutinise the painting of a crane. My word! As if a live crane was in front of me. What incredible detail . . . in the wrinkled skin of the legs and the tiny feathers sticking to its sharp claws. I was lost for words. I then noticed Havell standing silently behind me with a pleased expression, as if he had anticipated my reaction. I felt dizzy. So! Our old art too contains such an embarrassment of riches. Why then did I agonise so long about finding proper indigenous material to emulate?[44]

The crane was a Mansur acquired for the Calcutta Art Gallery by Havell (Fig. 145).[45]

145 Mansur: *A Siberian Crane*, gouache

The art teacher was a consummate strategist. Having set the young painter on his course, he planned his publicity campaigns for the fledgling art movement. Abanindranath's 'Indian' works were unveiled in 1900, at the exhibition of the art school. Curzon, who opened the exhibition, even expressed an interest in buying a painting. Abanindranath's public career as an artist had commenced. In 1901–2, his paintings on Hindu themes won a gold medal at the Congress Industrial Exhibition in Calcutta.[46]

In 1902–3, while on leave in England, Havell introduced the young

artist to the British public, addressing especially the Arts and Crafts sympathisers. Among the five 'historicist' works reproduced in *The Studio*, the *Buddha and Sujātā* was a significant departure from Varma's historicism. Abanindranath chose an actual historical figure, though the Buddha here was the saviour imagined by the Orientalist Edwin Arnold. His description of the shy maiden who brought the Buddha his first nourishment was the inspiration here: 'So thinking Him divine, Sujata drew trembling nigh'. *Padmāvatī*, however, continued with literary historicism, turning to the classic, *Vetāla Pañcavimśati*. *Abhisār* (Fig. 146) followed the typology of the romantic heroine on her way to a love-tryst more faithfully than in the earlier version. In his introduction, Havell deliberately chose the words 'spiritual sincerity', the keynote of *swadeshi* art, to describe Abanindranath. The artist, wrote Havell, took up the thread of Indian art, severed by imperial policy. When Indian taste had become corrupt, he alone displayed great strength in resisting the insidious charms of colonial art. His revival did not merely imitate 'an extinct style', as with artificial revivals in the West; Indian tradition was a living one.[47] Despite this optimism, one has to conclude that Abanindranath's revival was not so different from the self-conscious 'archaeology' of western artists.

The Durbar, Lord Curzon's grand imperial spectacle, held in Delhi in 1903, gave Abanindranath his first nationwide publicity. The state occasion was intended to give prominence to the traditional arts to underline the protective role of the Raj. The few contemporary works included Mhatre's sculptures and Abanindranath's works, *The Capture of Bahadur Shah*, *The Construction of the Taj* and *The Final Moments of Shah Jahan* (Fig. 147), all three inspired by romantic episodes in Indian history. Abanindranath had turned to the Mughals for inspiration at the outset of his career, even though the *swadeshi* doctrine tended to treat the Muslims as outsiders. Coomaraswamy, for instance, declared Rajput art as more Indian than the Mughal.[48]

Percy Brown (later Abanindranath's rival), commented in the exhibition catalogue that fine arts were little known in India and less practised. He made an exception about Abanindranath's paintings, 'in imitation of the Mohammadan School of Painting', for they showed 'a knowledge of drawing, and a grasp of the harmonious arrangement of colours that at once attracted attention'. In spite of some inaccuracies in drawing, 'the Construction of the Taj' had some merits and 'The most striking part of the effect is the exceptionally good modelling of the features which appear to have been copied from early likenesses . . . The whole effect of this particular composition is most rich and decorative'. But

> The best . . . was no doubt the one entitled 'The Last Days [Hours] of Shah Jehan' and represented two figures in a marble columned 'Imumbara', the one with a very natural turn of the head gazing across the water [at] the 'Taj

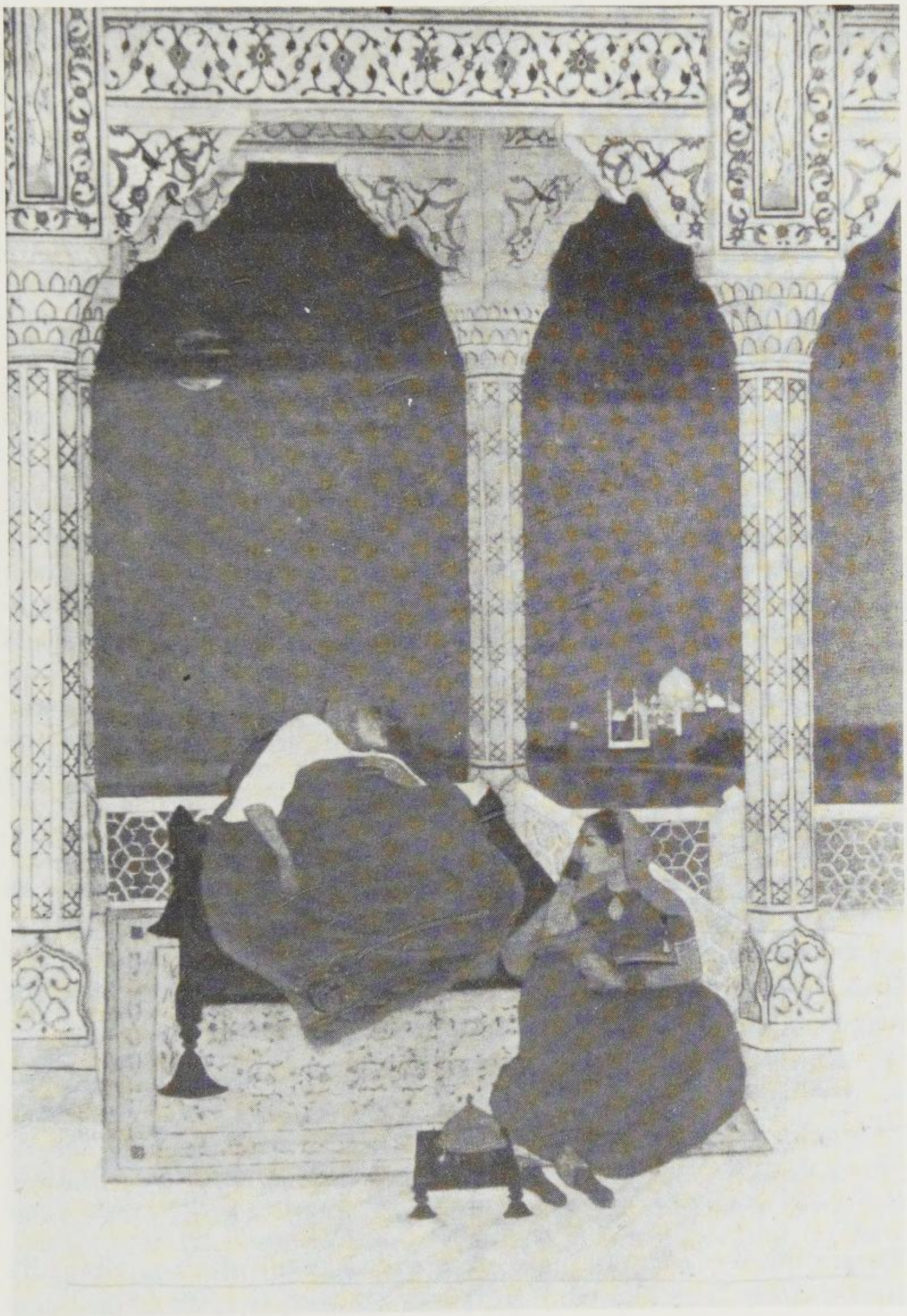
> Mahal'. The foreshortening of the head of the figure was one of the most striking parts of the picture. The delicate colouring and soft effect of the whole composition was most pleasing.[49]

The prize-winning work was duly forwarded to the annual Congress industrial exhibition in Madras. There another award came Abanindranath's way in recognition of his services to the nation. It is somewhat puzzling that Ravi and Raja Varma, who were on the jury, made no mention of Abanindranath. All that Raja recorded in his diary was that they found the standard of the exhibits poor. In 1904, the Bombay Art

146 Abanindranath Tagore: *Abhisār*, watercolour, is much closer in conception to Rajput-Pahari miniatures than earlier works

Society played host to the new painting from Bengal. Significantly, the *Times of India* greeted the movement as heralding the dawn of a new era in art.[50]

The first landmark in *swadeshi* art, *The Last Moments of Shah Jahan* attempted to put the newly-discovered precepts of Mughal art into effect. Not only did he note Abanindranath's meticulous 'archaeology', but



147 Abanindranath Tagore: *The Final Moments of Shah Jahan*, oil

Brown described his works as decorative, a high compliment indeed to the revivalist. The painting, produced during Aban's Mughal period, tells us a great deal about the 'traditional' method explored by him, the problems he faced and the limitations of a self-conscious 'archaeological' approach. The scale adopted by him was in line with Indian miniatures. Balendranath had prescribed the miniature scale as being more suitable to the eastern temperament.[51] However, other aspects of Mughal art did not appeal to Abanindranath. *Shah Jahan* was a half-hearted modification of European linear perspective to accommodate the Mughal idiom. The most noticeable 'archaeology' was the faithful rendering of Mughal *pietre dure*.

The discovery of Mughal art was exciting for the modern artist, but it failed to provide all the ingredients for a national style. Abanindranath's outlook was very different from that of the Mughal artist, whose brief did not include the treatment of human emotions. And yet this was the very aspect of Victorian art cherished by Abanindranath, its ability to portray human emotions with conviction; the 'Girl with the Dog' had cast a spell on the child Aban. For all their brilliance, contended Abanindranath, Mughal works lacked *bhāva* (feeling): human beings were rendered as lifeless mechanical dolls.[52] Brown remarked that the Bengali painter's works were 'infused with a feeling of life that was rarely attained by [Mughal] artists'.[53] This difference was also noted by Nivedita:

> Nothing could better illustrate at once the likeness and difference of the Mogul and the modern styles of painting, than a comparison between such pictures as the portrait of Sadi and Mr. Tagore's illustration for Omar Khayyam. There is a marvellous quality of truthfulness and imagination in the Mogul portraits. But the modern sets himself to convey the *mental* atmosphere of his subject. He so paints a man – seated on a roof, at sunrise, – that we follow him into his very dreams . . . The fault with the old painters may have been a leaning towards too great severity: the fault of the moderns is a tenderness and sentiment that approaches sometimes too near the verge of weakness.[54]

Clearly, the most relevant feature of *Shah Jahan* for nationalists was its nostalgic evocation of history. Abanindranath blended in a true Victorian fashion the passing grandeur of the Mughal empire with the pathos of Shah Jahan's dying moments. The modern outlook of the revivalist is suggested in the way the picture came to be painted:

> The bubonic plague [at the turn of the century] snatched my little daughter away. I felt so desolate that I left our Jorasanko home. Havell felt profoundly worried about my mental state and urged me to immerse myself in painting . . . Why is the picture so moving? I put in it all the pain and sorrow I felt for the daughter I lost.[55]

The treatment of *bhāva* (feeling) became the *leitmotiv* of Abanindranath's artistic career. This key word in traditional aesthetics had offered new

Victorian resonances to Ravi Varma, Balendranath and Abanindranath; to Abanindranath it came to stand for the sentimental, the elegiac and the melancholic.

Abanindranath's 'elective affinity' with Japan

In 1903, *The Pioneer*'s perceptive comment hinted at the direction Abanindranath's art was to take. They reproductions in *The Studio* of his work, it said, 'are very fascinating. They reveal no trace of English influence . . . In their *naive* grace of line, they suggest the art of Japan; but there is no mistaking their Indian origin'.[56] Various factors, not least a contemplative temperament, took Abanindranath away from his 'Mughal' experiment, to a new world of sensibility. Even as Abanindranath basked in the praise of his *Shah Jahan*, he dismissed the oil painting as unacceptably harsh. However, his growing 'elective affinity' with Japanese artists went beyond personal preference.

At the turn of the century, the Tagore home at Jorasanko became the shrine of cultural nationalism, with the constant presence of Havell, Nivedita, Okakura and others. Among them, Okakura's Pan-Asianism, with India as the fountainhead, became deeply etched in Abanindranath's mind. The young artist was present at the reception in honour of Okakura at the American consulate. There he also met Nivedita. At Jorasanko, the simple interior decoration that replaced the earlier Victorian ambience had its impetus from Japanese aesthetics; after 1905, Dwarkanath's furnishing was banished to the nether reaches of the house. Yet interior decoration was not the only impact of Japan. Okakura taught composition to Abanindranath by means of simple shapes such as matchsticks, emphasising the need for organic unity in art. A weak composition was like a reptile, he said. It survived even if cut into pieces, whereas a strong composition was like the human body: the tiniest pin-prick alerted the whole nervous system.[57]

In 1903 Okakura, after his return to Japan, sent his favourite pupils, Yokoyama Taikan (1868–1958) (Figs 148, 149) and Hishida Shunso (1874–1911), to Calcutta. They were to forge a common front with the like-minded Tagores against the growing hostility towards Pan-Asian ideas in Japan. Taikan, like Okakura, was from a Samurai family that had fallen on hard times. Taikan was a graduate of and later a teacher at the imperial school of fine arts. When Okakura was ousted from the school, he followed him to the newly-founded Nihon Bijutsuin. Shunso died young but Taikan went on to be the leading exponent of *nihonga*, the nationalist style of painting. As opposed to Japanese academic art (*yoga*), *nihonga* was Okakura's vision of oriental 'idealism', resting on three cardinal principles, tradition, nature and originality.[58]

The Japanese revival encouraged a return to 'the ancient spirit of race

148 Jyotirindranath Tagore: *Yokoyama Taikan*

myths and historical chronicles', similar to Abanindranath's Mughal historicism. And yet Asian revivalists were not traditional artists. Impersonal art transactions, open competition and artistic individualism had arrived in Japan. Okakura encouraged 'originality' as well as selective westernisation. *Nihonga* did not, for instance, eschew linear perspective, regarding it possible to reconcile the new with the old. In Calcutta, Taikan did not miss a single chance to sketch from life. For his allegorical portrait of Okakura (1898), Taikan assiduously copied ancient Nara paintings. The work was painted with *sumi* ink on a silk scroll. And yet, the less obvious but modern aspects were melodrama and literary symbolism, and above all, Taikan's personal style.[59]

Abanindranath gives us a lively account of the Japanese artists. The similarity of outlook of the Indian and the Japanese artists enabled them to communicate with ease. Shunso and Taikan stayed at Suren Tagore's house, while Taikan worked in Abanindranath's studio, selling the paintings completed there to maintain himself. In 1905, Havell engaged Taikan to teach Japanese brushwork and flower painting at the art school.[60] Abanindranath has recorded how curious both he and Taikan were about each other's artistic practice. Taikan drew on silk with pen and *sumi* ink with a few deft strokes. This sparing use of colours took the Bengali by surprise, as he was used to the more lavish hues of Mughal and European art. On Okakura's advice, Shunso and Taikan spent part of their time learning the rudiments of Hindu iconography. Their pictures of the Hindu goddesses, Sarasvatī and Kālī, have a certain historic interest. Taikan received lessons in Mughal art from Abanindranath, the outcome of which was his painting of *diwāli*, the Indian festival of lights.[61]

Taikan's approach to art left a deep impression on Abanindranath. He once asked the Japanese to treat the theme of *Rās-Līlā*, the 'love-play' of the divine pair, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, on a full-moon night. Taikan began with sketches of Rādhā's sari. After this, he spread a silk scroll on the floor and made preliminary drawings. Days went by but Taikan could not make any progress. One day he came across a dish of white flowers left by

149 Yokoyama Taikan: *Seisei Ruten*, watercolour

the ladies of the house, some of which had spilled on to his scroll lying on the floor. He was utterly riveted by the scene and started scattering the flowers all over the painting. At last he stumbled upon what was lacking in it. The work had simply failed to evoke the romance of *Rās-Līlā*. With extreme fastidiousness Taikan engaged in drawing each little flower in his painting (Fig. 150).[62] It is a charming story, and for Abanindranath nothing expressed better the spirit of Japanese art than this episode. A mystical element and reverence for telling details became part of Abanindranath's artistic equipage. For us the added interest is the fact that Taikan was unconsciously endorsing Abanindranath's doctrine of *bhāva* here by stressing the importance of idea and feeling in art.

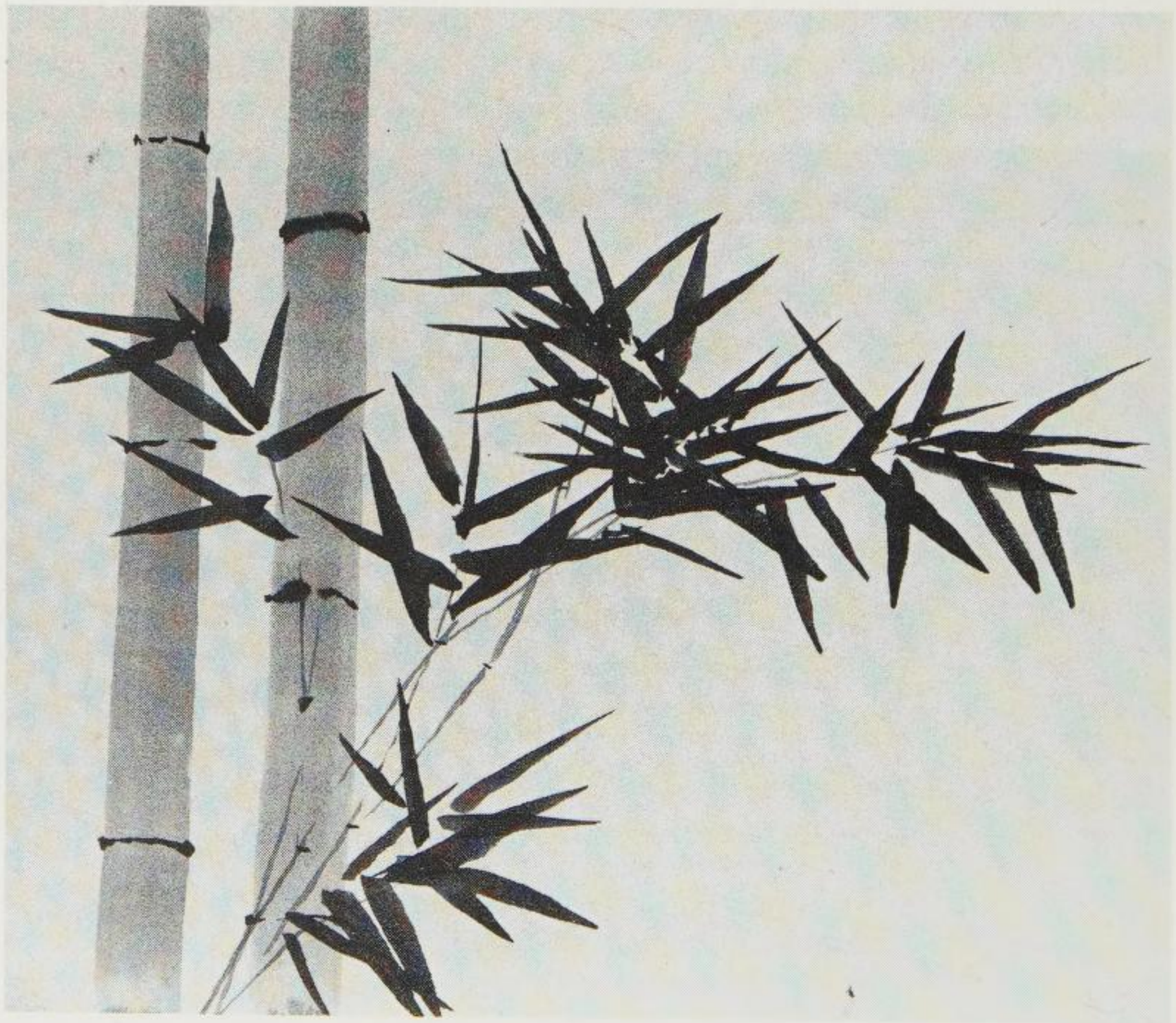
Taikan taught Abanindranath how to wield the brush with a light touch and of the evocative power of gestures (Fig. 151). The taciturn Japanese drew each line with infinite care and patience, which was a revelation to Abanindranath, more used to English drawing. The paper was moistened with liberal splashes of water by Taikan, which inspired Abanindranath's own technique of dipping the paper in water before painting it (Fig. XXIII). The evenly moist paper invested Aban's colours with a pervasive sense of melancholy that at last yielded the atmospheric effect he was searching for. However, Taikan's use of *morotai* in emulation of the Chinese was fraught with ambiguities: the blurring of outlines was seen by the purists in Japan as imitating European chiaroscuro.[63] Notwithstanding, *morotai* was ideal for the Indian artist's mellow elegiac landscapes.

150 Yokoyama Taikan: *Rās Līlā*, from *Rūpam*

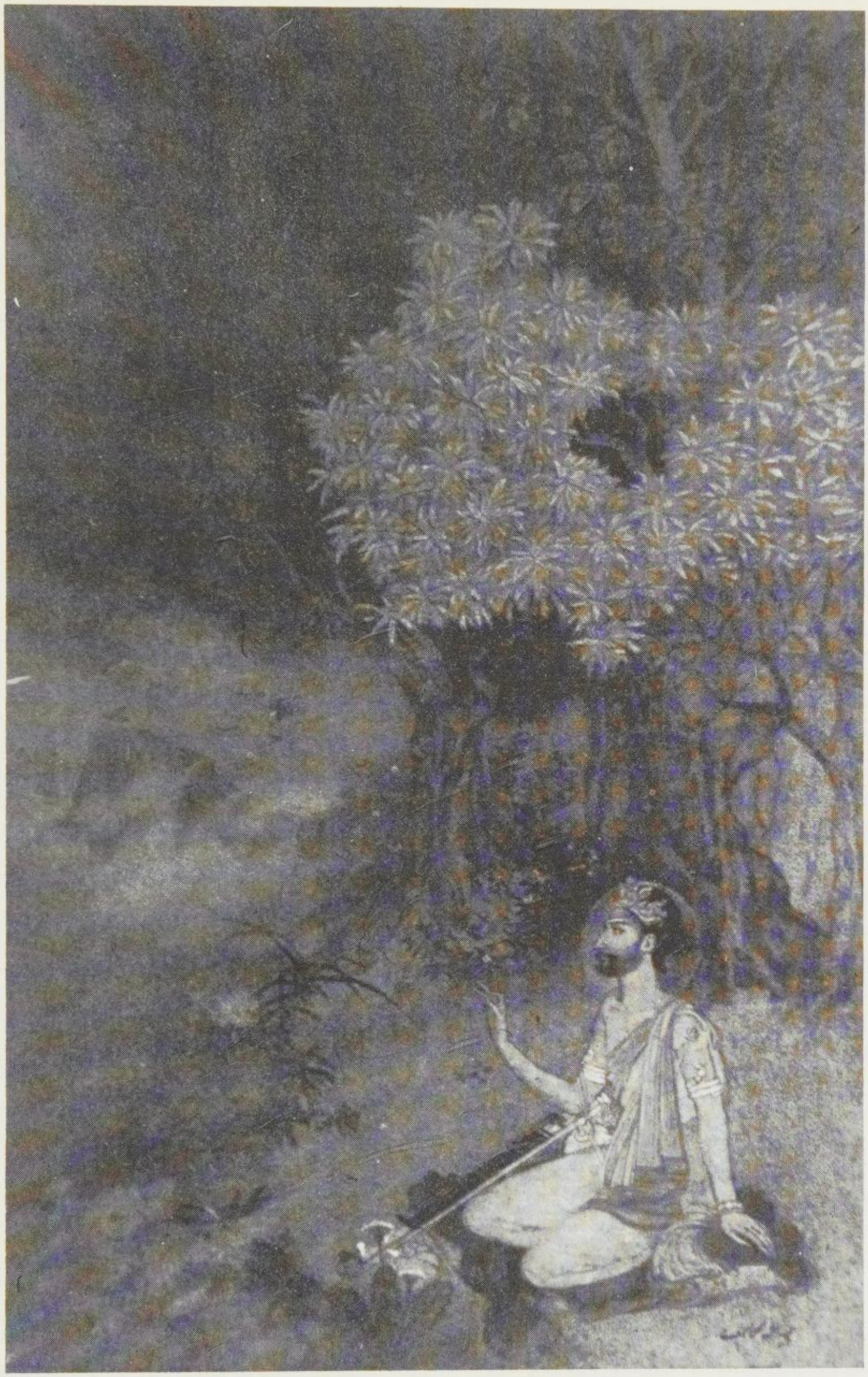
This brief but delightful encounter ended with the return of Taikan and Shunso to Japan. Abanindranath's 'elective affinity' came to fruition in his 'oriental art'. In *Yakṣa's Lament* (Fig. 152), published in *The Studio* (1905), the Indian miniature format remains: the difference is in the treatment of light. Unlike the strong colours and clear outlines of *Shah Jahan*, the background of the *Yakṣa* melts in a romantic haze. The process is at its most subtle in *The Music Party*, published in *Kokka* in 1908, with its chromatic treatment of pale shades. The same wash technique is used again in *Bhārat Mātā*, where the goddess is suspended in a yellowish-pink glow, and finally in the series, *Rubay'yat* of Omar Khayyam, translated by Edward Fitzgerald.[64]

'Orientalism', which sought to fuse Indian and Japanese cultures, left lasting traces in the Tagore milieu. On his visit to Japan in 1916, Rabindranath took Aban's foremost pupil, Nandalal Bose, with him to explore Japanese working methods. Nandalal, who preferred strong outlines, was more taken with minute ink drawings than with the atmospheric paintings of Japan. They called on Taikan and renewed old friendships. The poet invited a Japanese artist, Campo Arai, to teach at his school in Santiniketan. Nandalal took lessons in ink drawing from him. Campo was one of a number of Japanese artists to visit India at this time.[65]

Not everyone was convinced of Taikan's 'orientalism', not least the



151 Abanindranath Tagore: *Bamboo Stalk and Leaves*, watercolour



152 Abanindranath Tagore: *Love-sick Yaksha's Lament*, watercolour. This is an early 'historicist' work combining Japanese techniques with the Mughal format

artist himself. Although Rabindranath preferred the strength of Japanese art to the 'tameness' of the Indian revival, James Cousins, a fervent champion of the Bengal School, was unimpressed. In 1918 he complained about the 'lapse of aesthetic morale in Japanese painting':

> the works of Yokoyama Taikan, one of the then few living followers of the Japanese pictorial tradition modified within its own genre, were lovely in composition and technique, perfect if you wanted nothing more than a picture to look at, but 'soulless'.[66]

'How is it that you, the foremost progressive painter in Japan today, as I have been told, have shown me half-a-dozen pictures here the subject of which I have, in my short study of Japanese art, seen many times in the works of the artists both past and present', he asked Taikan. With an extraordinary self-doubt Taikan replied, 'It is because we Japanese have no originality. We do not invent or think. We take pleasure in going over and over the same subjects. Our art is all in its technique . . . We look to India for ideas'.[67]

Reclaiming the lost language of Indian art

While Abanindranath was preparing for the coming millennium of art, on 16 October 1905, Bengal was officially partitioned. Rabindranath took a leading role in public protests, gaining a reputation for his fiery speeches and songs on cultural self-reliance. Being rather retiring, Abanindranath did not join the mêlée. With a dry humour he dismissed the emotional excesses of the period: '. . . and then everyone got carried away by the tide of *swadeshi* sensationalism. I don't know how it began. One must do something for *la patrie* was the slogan. Uncle Robi was the leader of the gang. A *swadeshi* shoe shop was started in that fervour. Nivedita joined in. Even Sahibs felt obliged to chant "Bande Mātaram" (hail to the Mother)'.[68]

The previous March, Havell had asked Abanindranath to ornament the Calcutta Ladies' Congratulatory Address to Lady Curzon on her return to Calcutta after a severe illness with Buddha and the Wounded Swan motif. The Unrest in Bengal coincided with a sudden development at the art school, which opened the way for radical changes within the bastion of academic art. On the retirement of several of the 'old guard', Havell planned to make Abanindranath the Deputy Principal. As this was a senior post, he would lend authority to the Department of Advanced Design, the proposed centre for oriental art. Abanindranath was already a familiar figure. Installed by Havell in a room, he spent hours on his 'oriental' style. But Havell's was a bold move, since no Indian had been permanently appointed to a senior art post before.[69]

On 15 August 1905, Abanindranath joined the art school. He had no previous experience as an employee, as his letter of application pointed

out. The only Tagore to take up public service had been his ICS uncle, Satyendranath Tagore. However, Abanindranath had been assured by Havell of full freedom to pursue his own ideas, and the art teacher kept his word. In 1896, in order to restore the artisan bias of the school, Havell had channelled the subsidy for art students to the artisans without much success. His disappointment is clear from his later dismissal of the school as full of 'the flotsam and jetsam, sons of clerks, teachers and small proprietors, who were unable to afford a university career'.[70] Yet, in the late 1890s, he was keen to recruit these very same offspring of the bhadralok. In 1903, *The Bengalee* published his 'open letter' to Bengali youth. Art was inextricably linked with India's spiritual regeneration, and yet few educated Indians appreciated it. He invited them to take the initiative by 'using the living styles of your own country instead of the dead styles of Europe in building your houses, mansions and palaces'.[71]

While oriental art was being consolidated in the school, Havell continued his campaigns on its behalf abroad. In his second article in *The Studio* (June 1905), he introduced its leader to the British public. Coomaraswamy, for example, first read about Abanindranath in the art magazine. A full-page colour print of *Yakṣa's Lament* graced its frontispiece, with Wilson's translation of the relevant passage from the *Meghadūtam*. In 1906, the excitement generated by the *swadeshi* agitation finally elicited from Abanindranath the *Bhārat Mātā* (Mother India). He had earlier experimented with 'Banga Mātā' (Mother Bengal), and the 'Spirit of the Motherland'. Nivedita made her début as art critic by introducing this patriotic work in *Prabāsi*:

> We have here a picture which bids fair to prove the beginning of a new age in Indian art. Using all the added means of expression which the modern period had bestowed upon him, the artist has here given expression nevertheless to a purely Indian idea, in Indian form. The curving line of lotuses and the white radiance of the halo are beautiful additions to the Asiatically-conceived figure with its four arms . . . This is the first masterpiece, in which the Indian artist has actually succeeded in disengaging, as it were the spirit of the motherland . . . If nationality, and the civic ideal . . . are to be the distinguishing marks of the new era, then it is clear that we must have definite symbols under which to think of them . . .[72]

Bhārat Mātā was personified as a Bengali woman holding four symbolic objects in the conventional manner of a Hindu deity. But the objects were not conventional; they were emblems of nationalist aspiration towards economic and cultural self-sufficiency: *anna* (food), *vastra* (clothing), *sikṣā* (secular learning) and *dikṣa* (spiritual knowledge). The artist had visualised Bankim's celebrated nationalist poem, Bande Mātaram.

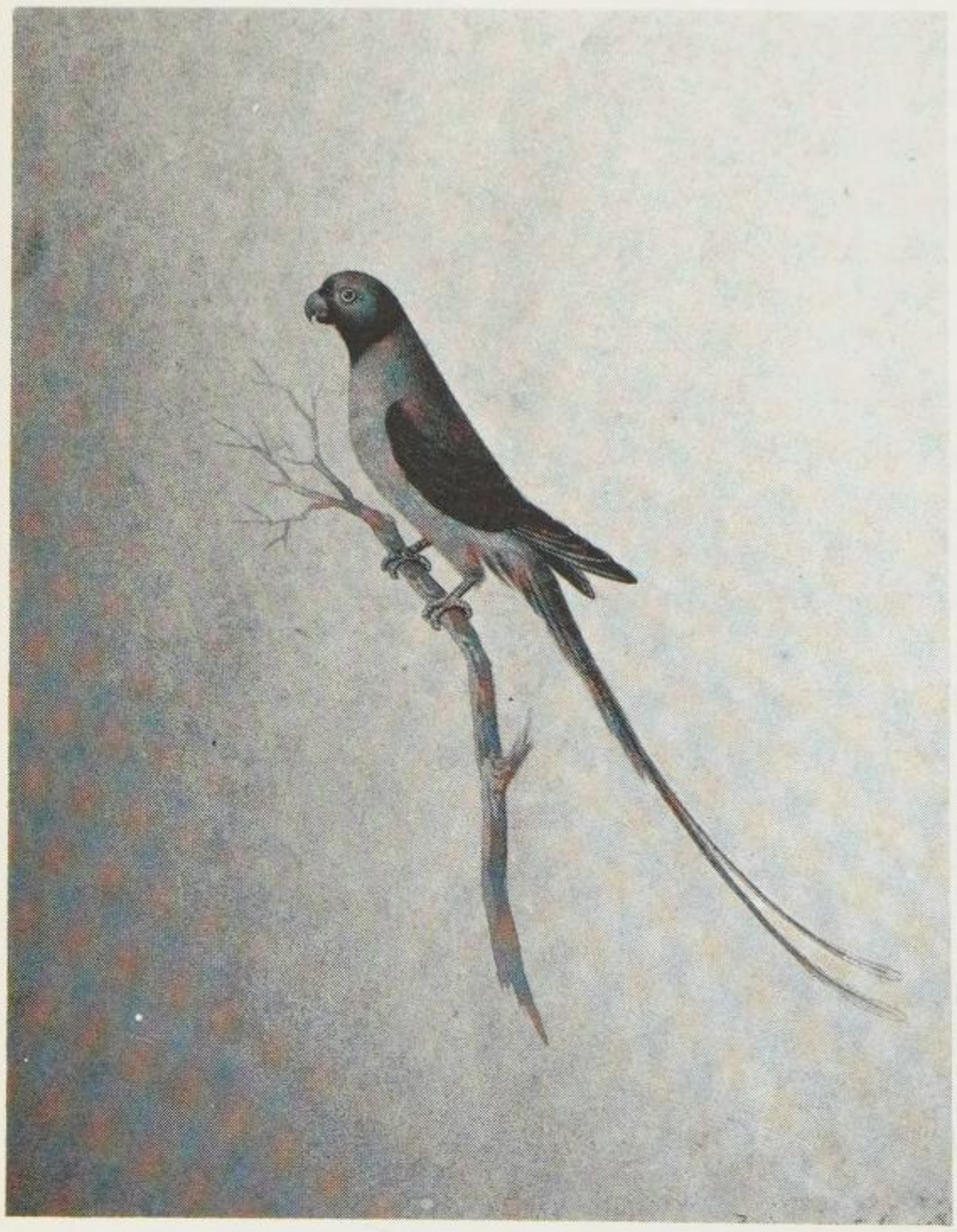
Nivedita proceeded to wring as much political message out of this 'civic and historical painting' as possible. Its propaganda value was

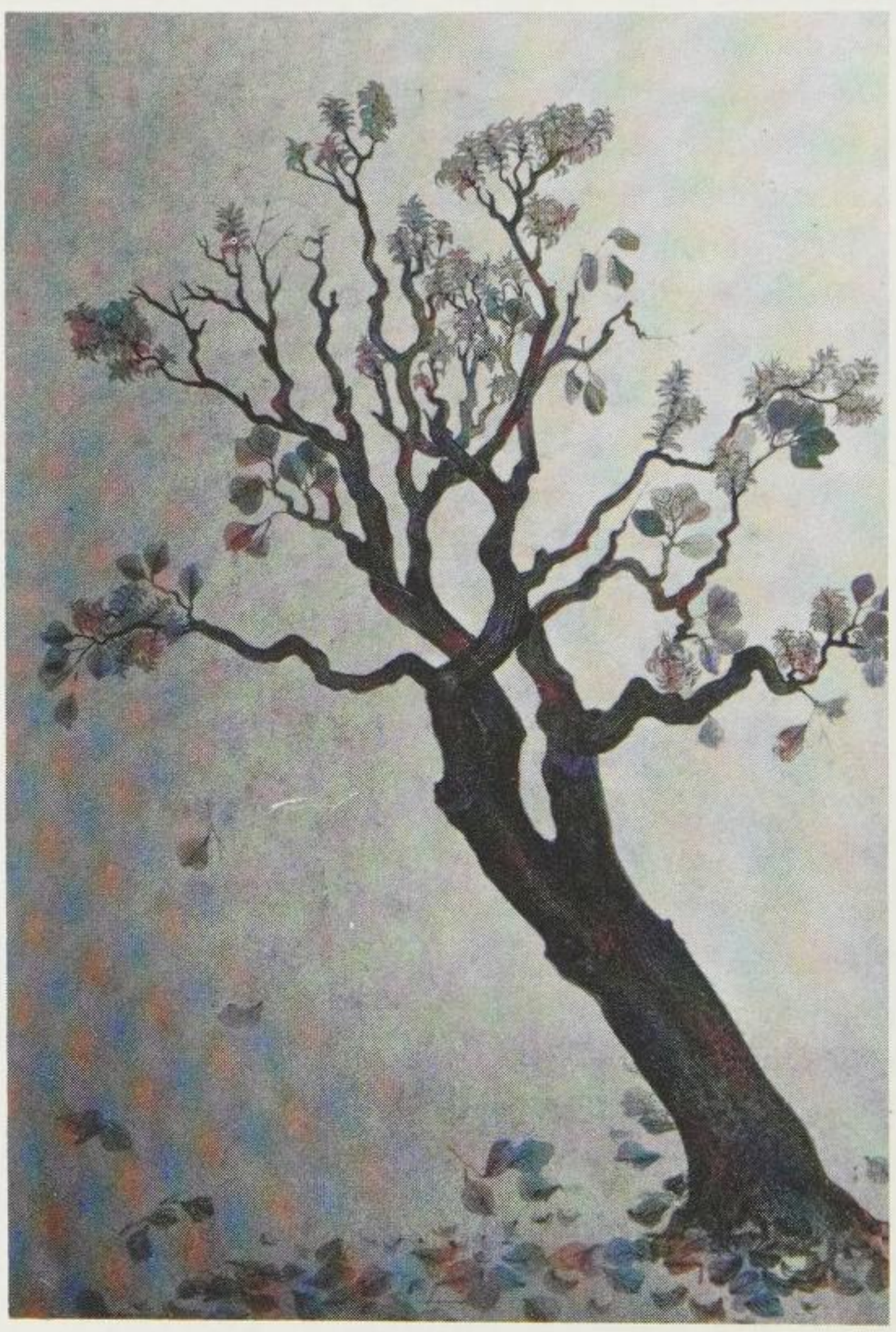
incalculable, she wrote. Since the cheap prints of Hindu gods and goddesses [Ravi Varma?] that circulated in the land were sadly inaccurate, *Bhārat Mātā* would be an appropriate substitute. It would appeal to the Indian heart because it spoke 'an Indian language'. 'I would reprint it', she announced, 'if I could, by tens of thousands, and scatter it broadcast over the land, till there was not a peasant's cottage nor a craftsman's hut . . . that had not the presentment of Bharat-Mata somewhere on its walls.'[73]

Havell, speaking of it in *The Studio* in 1908, was more reticent. Ignoring its political message, he offered it simply as a 'bold attempt to bring back into modern art the ideal type of [Hindu and Buddhist] divinity'.[74] Although the work had not attained the greatness of ancient art, it embodied great spirituality. He expected the artist to take further flights into such allegories. Later *Bhārat Mātā* was enlarged into a banner by a Japanese artist. Meanwhile, Iswari Prasad produced a line drawing of it for Jagadish Bose. In 1906–7, two of Abanindranath's students, Nandalal Bose and Asit Haldar, produced bloodthirsty versions of the motherland.[75]

153 Surendranath Ganguly: *A Bird*, part watercolour. An early sketch done at the art school under Abanindranath

154 *Right* Nandalal Bose: *A Flowering Tree*, part watercolour, produced at the art school like Fig. 153





In 1905–6, Abanindranath received his first batch of art students who were to be groomed for the mission of recovering 'the lost language of Indian art'. Surendranath Ganguly (1885–1909) (Fig. 153), from a modest Brahmin family, was the first to join the oriental painting class, having failed the university entrance test. Havell had originally sent him to Varanasi to train as a weaver but he was hastily brought back to work under Abanindranath. Soon Nandalal Bose (1882–1966) (Fig. 154), Asit Haldar (1890–1964) and K. Venkatappa (1887–1965) enrolled, followed by Sailendranath Dey (?–1972), Kshitindranath Majumdar (1891–1975) and Hakim Mohammad Khan, the first generation of Abanindranath's students. Nandalal at nineteen was married and the oldest. After he failed his course at the university, his family approached Abanindranath to accept him as an art student. Asit Haldar was related to the Tagores. Of the two students from outside Bengal, little is known about Hakim Khan of Lucknow. Venkatappa was descended from the court painters of Mysore. As a promising painter, he was sent by the Maharaja to Calcutta, which was acquiring a reputation for teaching genuine Indian art.[76]

The western art section at the school could not be abolished had Havell wished to. But the centre of gravity shifted to the oriental section, with the consequent eclipse of the 'fine arts'. For instance, Fanindra Bose, the sculptor, joined the school in 1904, only to leave for Europe within the year. Abanindranath was allowed a free hand to introduce his own ideas about art education (Fig. 155). Havell felt more at home with the aristocratic Abanindranath than with ordinary Bengali students. A small group of Indians and Europeans met at the art school after class hours to talk informally about Indian art. In the volatile political situation, Abanindranath's presence and the newly-founded Bangiya Kalā Samsad helped implement Havell's reforms. The highly-charged atmosphere at the school was a symptom of the political turbulence without. The linguist, Suniti Chattopadhaya, recalled his school days; reared on *Boy's Own Paper* and Victorian paintings he was thrilled to discover the Bengal School in the *swadeshi* period. In January 1906 the movement suddenly lost its main inspiration. Suffering a mental breakdown, Havell was forced to leave India, never to return.[77]

Two of Havell's reforms at the art school had far-reaching consequences for artistic nationalism, the first his ambitious *Gesamtkunstwerk* revival of the visual arts through architectural decoration. Havell followed the trend in Britain. William Morris's firm had sought to revive craftsmanship by bringing sculptors, designers and architects together to decorate buildings. From the 1860s, even the Royal Academy judged painters on their ability to produce decorative murals. Even though attempts at reviving murals failed, they broke down the barriers between architects and artists.[78]

Locke's students were the first to decorate the Government House in Calcutta, but it was Havell who made frescoes the cornerstone of his

applied design course. Knowing that wall-paintings were costly, Havell turned to wealthy Indians as part of his plan to improve public taste. He next drew the Public Works Department into his scheme of decorating public buildings, as Griffiths and Kipling had done in Bombay. Instead of being consigned to museums, a genuine artistic revival was an integral part of domestic and public life. In 1900–1, his students received a major commission for murals for the Belvedere, the Lieutenant-Governor's residence, in addition to painting a small number of private homes. It

155 Abanindranath Tagore: *A Sketch* (produced at the art school for students)

prompted the optimism of the school report of 1902 that fresco painting was 'appreciated by the people'.[79]

The Indian tradition of *fresco buono* murals was still carried on in Jaipur, a process brought to the school in 1902–4. Taught by a master craftsman with local materials, within a few years, markedly original frescoes were claimed for the students, though prematurely. Havell failed to move the PWD, but Curzon, with his concern for traditional art, employed the Jaipur craftsmen to redecorate the rooms of his official residence.[80] Another opportunity to decorate a public space arose in 1905 with the planned refurbishment of the Calcutta Art Gallery. As Havell recalled in 1908: 'Some time ago [Abanindranath] began to prepare at my suggestion a remarkable series of designs in fulfilment of a project for the decoration in fresco of the new Calcutta Art Gallery, now in the course of erection'.[81] He could not have chosen a less suitable person. More at home with delicate miniatures, Abanindranath's plans did not go beyond a few tentative sketches on stone. Among these, *Kacha and Devajānī* (1908) (Fig. 156), is the best known.[82] One 'of Mr. Tagore's earliest works', wrote Havell with slight disappointment,

> an essay in Indian *fresco buono*, which shows at the same time his technical deficiencies and his rare power of artistic expression . . . Mr. Tagore has expressed, with wonderful directness and with the simplicity of the highest art, the struggle between passion and duty which is the motive of the story. The true poetry of the composition and the depth of expression more than compensate for his obvious technical shortcomings.[83]

The use of murals to disseminate *swadeshi* ideas in the nation's buildings also fired Nivedita's imagination; mural decoration was to be a moral force in guiding public taste. Holding up *Bhārat Mātā* as a supreme civic ideal, she proposed replacing the religious subjects in Hindu temples with such themes: 'I have long thought that if I were an Indian prince I would use my surplus revenues first and foremost for the promotion of civic and historic painting'.[84] Nothing boosted British pride more, she wrote, than the murals of Manchester Town Hall and of Westminster. Their only drawback was being confined to the interior because of the English weather; whereas India with its warm climate would enjoy ambitious murals on the outer walls of national shrines. Her admiration for Puvis de Chavannes sprang from the French patriot's embellishment of national monuments with frescoes, such as 'Saint Geneviève watching over Paris', depicting the patron saint of the city. In 1909, reviewing Havell's book on Indian art, she wrote:

> There can be no doubt that there is a great future in India for mural painting. The large hall of assembly that the coming era of nationality and democracy will popularise, – for purposes of education and of the civic life, – will all demand decoration, and undoubtedly that decoration will take

> the form of painting, to a great extent. This painting will have three different subjects, the national ideals, the national history, and the national life.[85]

The public mural project was realised in Jagadish Bose's institute where Nandalal, who handled monumental scale with ease, decorated the Great Hall with an allegorical subject. But murals did not flourish until the 1920s at Santiniketan under Nandalal, the period when Bombay art students under Solomon decorated New Delhi buildings.[86]

Havell's second reform, namely the nationalisation of the art school, hinged on the fate of the European art gallery. Sweeping out the cobwebs

156 Abanindranath Tagore: *Kacha and Devajāni*, watercolour sketch for fresco

of Victorian taste began with the Mughal art collection (1897–1903). Havell's reorganisation highlighted the applied arts: Bidri metalwork, Burmese silver, Persian embroidery and carpets. In 1904, emboldened by the successful sale of European paintings that funded further Indian acquisitions, Havell proposed the sale of the entire collection. For as

> in Madras, the art-gallery attached to the school contained only European pictures, a collection much inferior to that of many provincial towns in England, but it was not easy to reverse the policy of my predecessors in this case, as it was a Government collection which had been inaugurated under viceregal patronage . . . It was not until a good many years afterwards . . . that I ventured to ask the Government to provide sufficient funds for extending the Indian Section by selling the collection of European pictures.[87]

But times had changed since Northbrook and Temple. Not only did Havell have a sympathetic Viceroy in Curzon, but he enjoyed the confidence of the committee, especially of John Woodroffe. A judge at the Calcutta High Court, Woodroffe later embraced Hinduism and wrote the classic study of Tantrism, *Śakti and Śākta*. The committee nonetheless took a year to reach a decision.[88]

The assault on a gallery of European 'masterpieces', created by a Viceroy and widely welcomed in Bengal, was Havell's most controversial measure. It caused implacable hostility between the Tagore circle and the bhadralok public, many of them active in *swadeshi* agitation. Rabindranath defended Havell's action on the grounds that western education had only produced hybrids. In *Prabāsi* (1906), Nivedita also penned a spirited defence of Havell. She spoke glowingly of *The Coronation of Sītā and Rāma*, an eighteenth-century miniature purchased by the gallery, as a masterpiece and a genuine sample of Indian culture. Havell wrote years later:

> a considerable outcry was raised in the Bengali press because it was said that I was lowering the standard of the school. In the school itself I met with a storm of opposition from the students, who were secretly supported by some members of the staff trained on the old system. At one time one student was left on the school benches while the rest were holding mass meetings in the maidan outside . . . so that such knowledge of the European methods as they possessed should not be lost to the citizens of Calcutta by my reactionary policy.[89]

Havell's Indianisation of the art school had a limited success as western art teaching was restored in 1915 after Abanindranath's resignation (see p. 314). Nor did Havell's Jaipur fresco project quite take off. His immediate impact was on the Bengal School, which gained the confidence to break out of academic naturalism. Yet his generalised antipathy to Classical art left key questions unanswered. He neither defined decorative art clearly, nor did he explain why he disliked naturalism, confining himself mainly

to architecture. The budding artist-patriot was not told why naturalism was inimical to *swadeshi* art, nor the fact that the difference between western 'pictorial' and Indian 'decorative' conventions rested on a specific *western* definition of naturalism. This was the illusion of solidity created through single-point perspective, chiaroscuro and directional lighting, a definition that led western critics to equate decorative art with a flat linear style. Though hazily sensed, this distinction did not dawn on cultural nationalists until later, until which time they continued to produce semi-illusionist works.

Abanindranath at the Art School

After Havell's departure, Abanindranath took over as the Acting Principal, introducing subtle but radical changes in teaching, far beyond those envisaged by Havell. A student of South Kensington, Havell, like the rest of the teachers, favoured structured courses and accurate, geometrical drawing as the foundation of all sound art.[90] His confidence that he knew what was good for the 'constitutionally' conservative Bengalis brought out his ingrained paternalism.

Abanindranath's advanced design class helped weaken the paternalist structure of the art school. Having rebelled against routine all his life, Abanindranath preferred an experimental environment. Of course he could not avoid giving some training, especially in his own wash technique. But he was determined to liberate art teaching from the mechanistic practices associated with South Kensington. He warned students with wry humour: 'art schools cannot create artists, they can only provide the means. Do not come to the art school until you have become an artist'. He teased them: 'paint-brushes and the compass are mighty weapons indeed, but only if they are wielded properly'.[91] Artistic sensibility counted more than mechanical skill; he wished to awaken this quality in his students, not to tell them what style to adopt: that was an entirely personal matter.

Abanindranath's dislike of imposing his own preferences is illuminated by an anecdote. Once his student Nandalal sought Aban's comment on the former's painting, *Umā's Meditation*. Aban advised him to add more colour and deck Uma with more ornaments to suggest a pretty girl in the first bloom of youth. That night, however, he could barely sleep, feeling like an intruder and suffering pangs of conscience. Perhaps that was not how Nandalal had envisioned Uma? At break of dawn, he rushed over to Nandalal to find him sitting in front of the picture, ready to begin the alterations. The teacher implored with him not to touch the picture, which puzzled Nandalal. But 'it would have been disastrous. I had nearly spoilt the picture. From then on I became very cautious. I have learnt that art is essentially an individual expression. How can anyone give advice on it?'[92]

The experimental mode of teaching had its excitements and pitfalls. In an exhilarating atmosphere, the self-confident ones flourished while the 'weaker vessels' sank without a trace. In this context one cannot but admire Havell's perspicacity in sensing the Bengali artist's advantages. 'Mr. Tagore', he pointed out, 'though well-educated in the European sense, never came within the depressing intellectual environment of an Indian university and very speedily gave up the European routine of technical training'.[93] And yet Abanindranath, who was so keen to respect the students' creativity, could barely control his temper if he caught any of them secretly drawing from life, especially from the nude. Once he upbraided a hapless student in the following terms, 'Why are you wasting your parents' hard-earned money on a model? If you are really so keen on such indulgence, why not visit the red light district? It may be cheaper in the long run. But I ask you, do you have the right to spread such corruption in our society?'[94]

Creative freedom was one thing; artistic 'archaeology' for the nation was quite another. It was incumbent upon every art student to discover his heritage as part of *swadeshi* regeneration. A serious obstacle was the widespread ignorance of Indian mythology among students. Abanindranath complained:

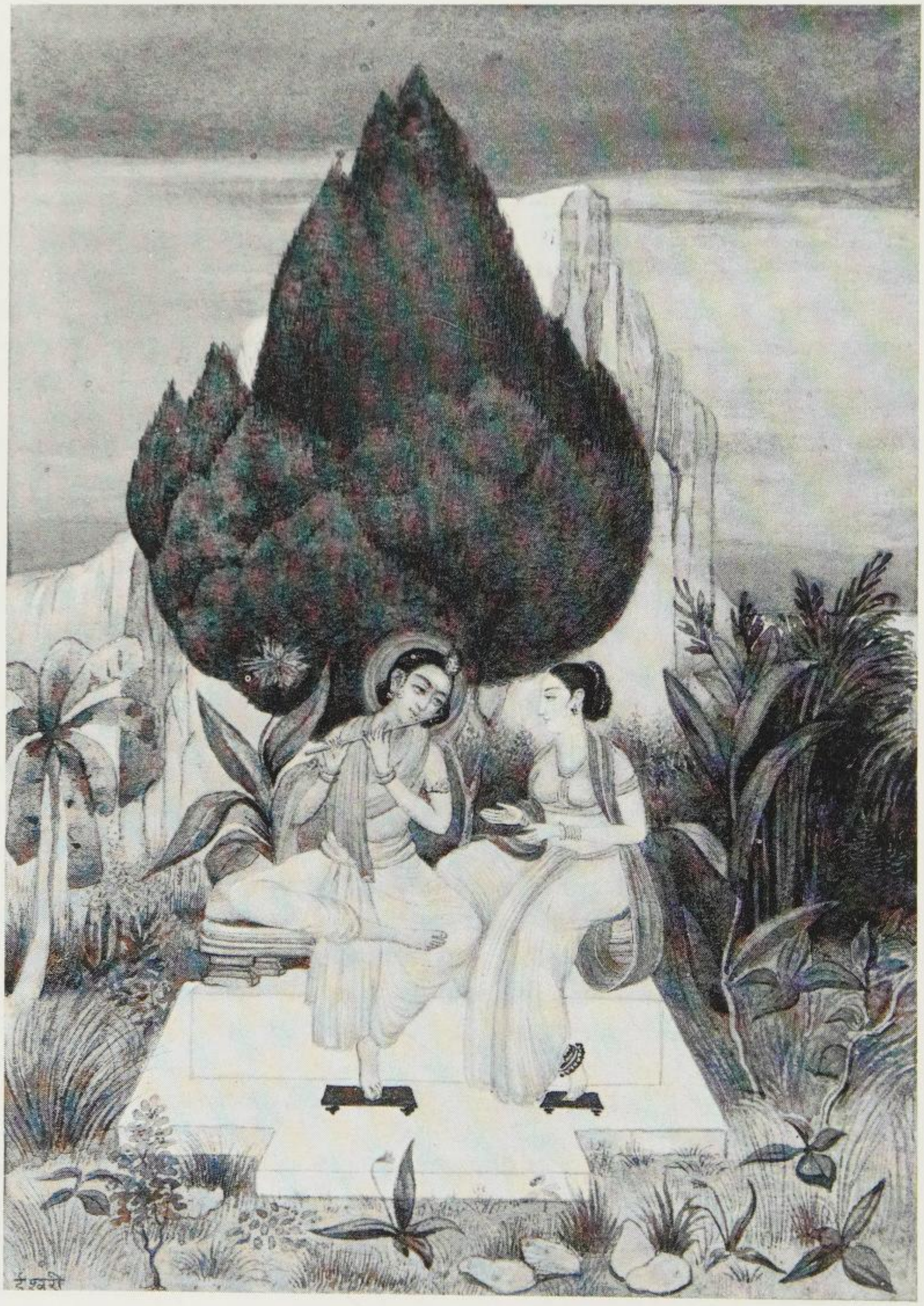
> The process of denationalisation went on for years, and for years our art students were made to spend the best part of their life in fruitless attempts to acquire ideas about an art which they never could or ever would rightly understand . . . We find few cultural men amongst the art students here. To produce any really good work the art student must be thoroughly conversant with the classical lore of his country . . . [with] its religious and social ideals, [and with] the episodes of the Indian epics and history.[95]

With a view to improving the student's mind, he introduced lectures and engaged a *pandit* to narrate the epics for inspiring students. But Ravi Varma, for instance, had already ransacked the epics for inspiration. The next obvious step then was to find a genuine traditional painter. Lala Iswari Prasad Varma, who was a pattern-maker for Manchester piece goods, joined the art school in 1906 as a teacher of foliage drawing (Fig. 157). In 1905 he had assisted Abanindranath in decorating the address to Lady Curzon. Iswari Prasad was traditional only in not being English-educated. His ancestors, the Patna artists, had modified their courtly style with western devices in the last century.[96]

The cultural nationalists discover Ajanta

The final stage in the recovery of the Indian heritage was the apotheosis of Ajanta. Victorian aesthetics assigned the highest place to frescoes as monumental history painting in the world's art. While Mughal art lacked

the scale, Jaipur wall paintings were devoid of the gravitas. But Ajanta, decorative art on a grand scale, could be the reference 'museum' for national murals. Documented by Griffiths in 1896–7, Ajanta was singled out by Havell in 1902 as an examplar for art students.[97] Japanese artists paid visits to India to learn from this ultimate source of Buddhist art. A pilgrimage to this national shrine became *de rigueur*, even if one learned little from it. Even Dhurandhar, an academic artist, imagined that Ajanta



157 Ishwari Prasad: *Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā*, watercolour

was his inspiration. Later on, Mukul Dey, a pupil of Abanindranath, was to publish his own pilgrimage to the site.[98]

In 1910 Abanindranath's students had a chance to copy Ajanta frescoes. Griffiths's students had copied them in the 1890s but without any nationalist fervour. Most of these copies were destroyed in the Crystal Palace fire. The rest were deposited in South Kensington. Christiana Herringham, a copyist and authority on mural techniques, wished to improve on them. She was impressed by the court scenes at Ajanta and the ease with which artists distinguished 'between persons of low and noble races – powers that Europeans had not yet acquired in the time of Giotto, five hundred years later'.[99] After a short visit in 1906, she prepared to return to Ajanta in 1910 to complete the work. Meanwhile, Nivedita, keen on the revival of civic murals, visited Britain. She asked Coomaraswamy to intercede with Mrs Herringham on behalf of Abanindranath's students. Although Mrs Herringham had already engaged Bombay artists as assistants, she was persuaded by Abanindranath. The art teacher agreed to bear the expenses of the students in exchange for a set of copies to remain in India. Abanindranath was supported in this by the Indian Society of Oriental Art (founded 1907), eager to substitute the practice of sending art students abroad with visits to sites within India.[100]

Nandalal Bose, Asit Haldar, and later Samarendra Gupta and Venkatappa, joined Mrs Herringham. Two others, Syed Ahmad and Mohammad Fazl-ud-Din Qazi, came from Hyderabad. Abanindranath, excessively protective towards his students, dispatched Ganendranath Brahmachari, a monk at the Ramakrishna Mission, to Ajanta to cater to their gastronomic needs. A competent painter, Ganendranath copied some of the frescoes there.[101] Nivedita visited the site with Jagadish Bose, publishing her impressions of Ajanta in *Modern Review*. Mrs Herringham's report on her work at the site came out in *The Burlington Magazine*. Nandalal sketched the figures, dresses, ornaments and other details to gain an insight into these ancient paintings. We learn from him that with little English they did not manage to get close to Mrs Herringham. As for her, she did not show much personal interest in them. While they were at the site, it was visited by the Governor of Bombay. Because of the 'seditious' reputation of Bengali students, the four were not allowed near the visiting dignitaries. On completion of the work, the copies were sent to Calcutta and displayed at Jagadish Bose's house. Nivedita brought Lady Minto, the Vicereine, to view them. The copies were subsequently shown at the Indian Society of Oriental Art.[102]

For all the importance attached by nationalists to Ajanta, its only clear influence was on the ceiling decorations at Jagadish Bose's institute. Interestingly, Abanindranath never joined his students at Ajanta. It is true that he disliked travelling great distances. But it is equally true that Ajanta was not compatible with his own dreamlike lyricism or with his use of pale colours. Most of his pupils, especially Asit Haldar, followed him in

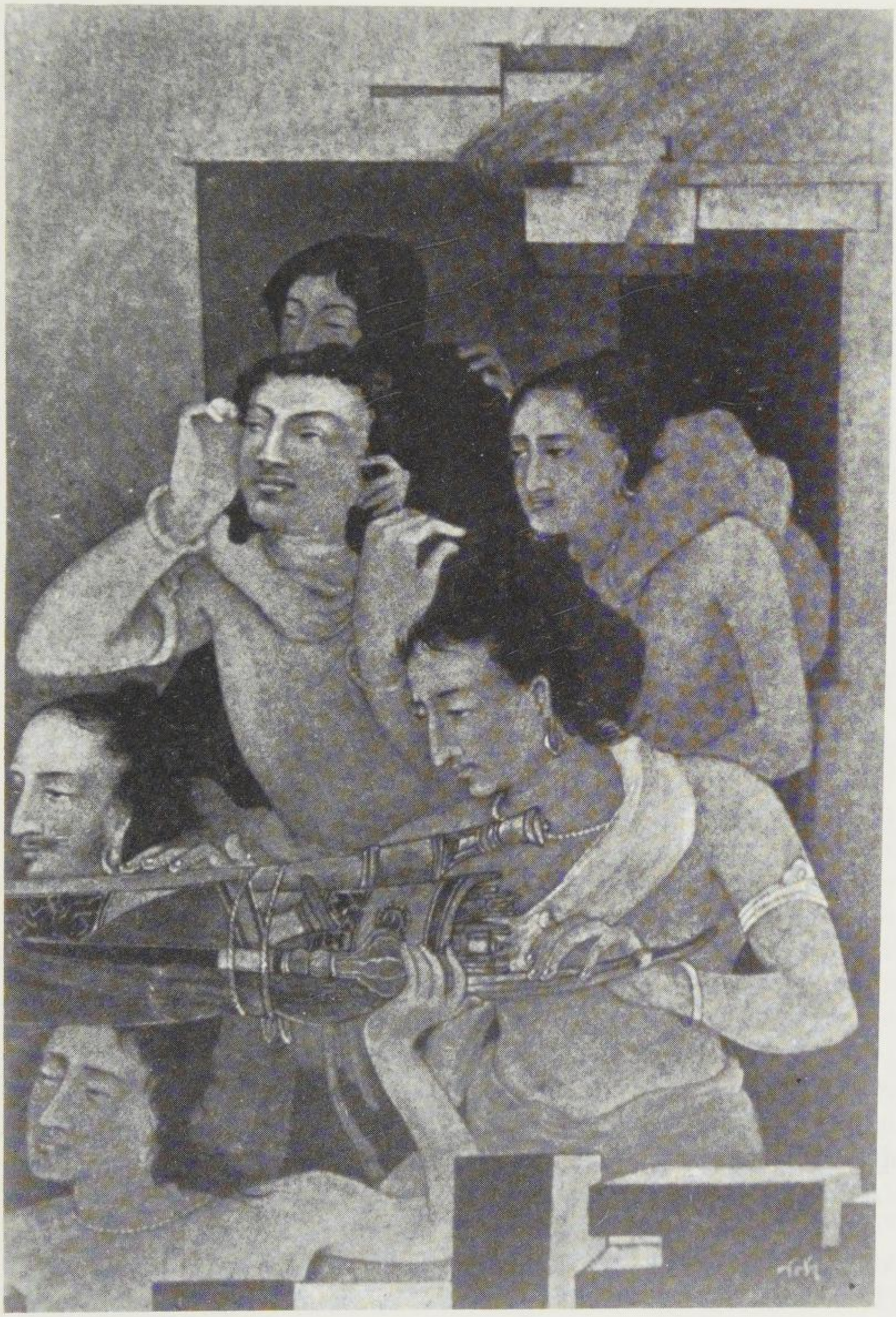
this, even though Asit produced some fine copies of Ajanta panels as well as using a well-known figure from the site in a painting (Fig. 158). The notable exception was Nandalal who was moved by the Buddhist monument, as evident in his female figures and colour schema (Fig. 159). At the exhibition of oriental art in 1911 and 1912 the large-scale scenes by Nandalal bore the imprint of Ajanta.[103]

158 Asit Haldar: *The Negro Princess*, watercolour

ORIENTAL ART AT HOME AND ABROAD

Packaging and marketing oriental art; ISOA and India society

In 1907, the Indian Society of Oriental Art was set up in order to place the Bengal School on secure foundations. The orientalists knew that the



159 Nandalal Bose: *House of Lac*, watercolour, from Nivedita's book on Indian mythology which shows the influence of Ajanta (originally shown at Paris exhibition of 1914, see p. 324)

success of academic art depended a great deal on the patronage of art societies. Though orientalists enjoyed government support, they still needed a regular institutional outlet like the art societies of Bombay and Simla. The Society was conceived informally during an exhibition of paintings by Abanindranath, Taikan and Shunso at the Bengal Landholders' Association. John Woodroffe, a close ally of the Tagores, floated the idea of a permanent venue for exhibitions of the new oriental art.[104]

The inaugural meeting was held at the art school on Saturday 6 April 1907 at 4.30 p.m., at which Europeans outnumbered Indians. A judge at the Calcutta High Court, R. F. Rampini, chaired the meeting. Abanindranath, Gaganendranath and their close friends Woodroffe, Norman Blount, E. Thornton and F. A. Larmour were there. The lone salon artist, Jamini Gangooly, was conspicuous by his presence. Blount and Abanindranath were elected joint secretaries, while Lord Kitchener, Curzon's mortal enemy, was probably chosen as President simply to snub the former Viceroy. The founding members resolved to hold future meetings as cosy 'at homes'. Havell was made a member *in absentia* in recognition of his unique services. The Lieutenant-Governor, Lord Carmichael, collector of Indian art and an admirer of Abanindranath, was invited to join. The critic, Ordhendra Gangoly, and Asit Haldar, Nandalal Bose and Samarendranath Gupta, the three students of Abanindranath, became members. The aim of the association was not only to host exhibitions of oriental art but also to spread its message through lectures and publications. Deciding not to debar academic artists formally, so as not to exclude Gangooly, the Society nonetheless sought links with similar institutions.[105]

Meanwhile, in England Havell began mobilising support for Indian art which was to lead eventually to the India Society. Paradoxically, Havell's absence from India worked in favour of the movement. The Morrisian groups in Britain lent a sympathetic ear to the new voice from India. But Havell did not only address the converted; he and Coomaraswamy challenged the Classical hierarchy of the arts and the inferior status assigned to the decorative arts. Havell's *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (1908), which made a passionate plea on behalf of ancient Indian art, contained a short epilogue on the Bengal School: 'One of Mr. Tagore's latest compositions [is] Aurangzeb examining the Head of Dara . . . the dramatic power with which he has treated this tragic episode in Mughal history will show the versatility of his art'.[106]

Havell's attack on western critics for neglecting Indian art prompted a sustained reply in *The Edinburgh Review*. His extravagant claims for Indian art, the paper said, signalled the end of the Renaissance canon and the loss of consensus on artistic perfection. Yet the paper questioned the value of a 'non-progressive' art such as the Indian. We are not sure of Havell's response to this, but he was amused by *The Times* reviewer, who lost his temper with Havell, accusing him of being ignorant and illogical. Havell, who had recently met Coomaraswamy, told him that the

accusation of illogicality by *The Times* reflected a widespread tendency, especially among officials. Indian art was good enough for Indians but hardly comparable to Greek art. For Havell, this attitude was illogical, for surely Indian art could not survive if Indians themselves were discouraged from taking their own art seriously.[107] In July 1908 he made the same point in *The Studio*:

> We have succeeded in persuading educated Indians that they have no Art of their own, though evidences of its existence [are] more extensive than those of British Art . . . I returned filled with amazement at the insularity of the Anglo-Saxon mind, which has taken more than a century to discover that we have far more to learn from India in Art, than India has to learn from Europe.[108]

The essay reviewed the new movement but this time with subdued enthusiasm. Havell was better acquainted with ancient art: even if the Bengal School did not attain the abstract level of ancient art, it expressed great spirituality. His only wish was that Abanindranath would continue to take flights into allegory, alluding to the paintings *Bhārat Mātā*, *Aurangzeb with Dara's Head* and *The Music Party*. By now, the new art teaching was bearing fruit: Nandalal Bose and Suren Ganguly hardly betrayed '[the] weak draughtsmanship of early works of Abanindranath' (Fig. 160). Nandalal's *Vetālapañcavimśati* and Surendranath's *Flight of Lakshman Sen* were complimented on their originality, technical skill, expression and dramatic feeling. But above all, their challenge to western mimesis would 'exercise a very far-reaching influence on the future of art in India'.[109]

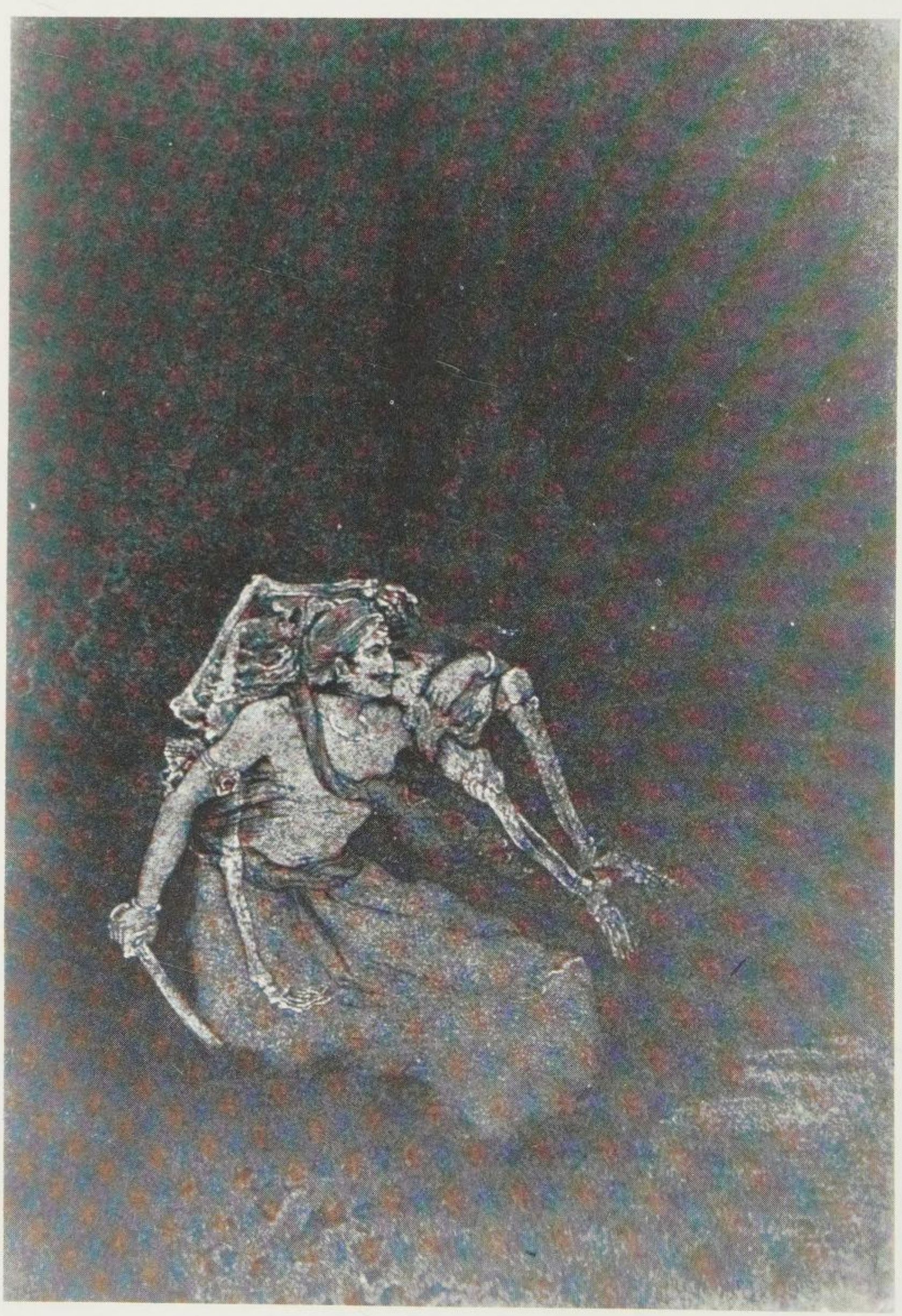
In 1909, Coomaraswamy's seminal *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* came out, which exalted not only decorative art but the continuity of tradition itself. Both he and Havell were given a rousing ovation by Nivedita. Coomaraswamy's work was a

> classic [that] has been . . . written from the Eastern standpoint by one fully competent to have dealt with a Western subject of the same kind, with equal authority. All who know the writer will look with eagerness for further works from his pen . . . It is by means like these that an unassailable background of knowledge and culture may be added to the sentiment of *Swadesh*, and the doctrine of Nationality.[110]

'We have here for the first time a book about Indian art written by a European', she wrote, 'which expresses, throughout its pages, a feeling of love and respect for India and her people'.[111] Indian ideals were not second-hand Hellenism but merited a high place in world art. 'The European preconception that India at all times borrows everything from the West', she concluded, 'has been unspeakably discouraging to Indian originality and self-respect'.[112]

In 1909, Havell gained a valuable ally in the painter William Rothenstein, inviting him to view the Indian collection he had formed at

the Calcutta Art Gallery. The paintings were on temporary loan to him. Rothenstein was an early connoisseur of Mughal miniatures, when they were scarcely known in Europe. A founder of the New English Art Club, he had witnessed the aesthetic revolution in Paris at the turn of the century. The exposure had led to his interest in non-Classical art. Even before Rothenstein met Havell, he had heard of his 'preaching' on the significance of Indian art. On meeting Coomaraswamy at C. R. Ashbee's



160 Nandalal Bose: *Vetāla and the King*, watercolour

Arts and Crafts Guild, he came to know of Havell's article in *The Studio* on the Bengal School.[113]

While the network of alliances was being forged by Havell, events moved towards a showdown between the 'old guard' and the 'young turks' of Indian art. It happened after Havell's lecture at the Royal Society of Arts on 13 January 1910. Two days before Havell's talk, the historian Vincent Smith lectured on the well-worn theme that higher arts did not exist in India, deliberately provoking the 'mystics', Havell and Coomaraswamy. The critics' complaints, he argued, were justified in view of the repulsive character of some Hindu sculptures. While not demonstrating much originality, Indians had nonetheless cleverly transmuted their Hellenistic borrowings, and indeed some works were of reasonable quality. Hence, he concurred with Purdon Clarke, head of the Indian collection at South Kensington, that the prospects of Indian art had been blighted by the undue praise of its votaries. While it deserved a respectable place among arts of the world, it was not of the first rank, 'except for its eminent suitability to its country and people'.[114]

Havell and Comaraswamy rose up to protest. The chairman, who had no experience of Indian art, concluded the session with the remark that the multiple arms of Hindu images were a sign of weakness, because 'the genius must also express the idea of universality'.[115] Sensing the strength of the prejudice, Coomaraswamy informed Rothenstein beforehand that he was going to be at Havell's lecture and expected him to come. After the talk, Birdwood made his unfortunate quip about a Buddha image resembling a suet pudding and a number of the audience protested. Among them, Walter Crane made a favourable comparison between Medieval European and south Indian sculptures.[116]

After the meeting broke up in heated exchanges, Rothenstein organised an impressive public protest against Birdwood. Writing to him on 15 February, Havell said 'I think it is high time that artists began to counteract [Birdwood's and Purdon Clarke's] influence . . . at South Kensington . . .'.[117] The flurry of activities culminated in a letter to *The Times* (28 February), signed by a host of literati, Morris's followers and members of the Irish Literary Movement. The last lines of the letter were addressed to the Bengal School:

> Confident that we here speak for a very large body of qualified European opinion, we wish to assure our brother craftsmen and students in India that the school of national art in that country, which is still showing its vitality and its capacity for the interpretation of Indian life and thought, will never fail to command our admiration and sympathy as long as it remains true to itself. We trust that, while not disdaining to accept whatever can be wholesomely assimilated from foreign sources, it will jealously preserve the individual character which is an outgrowth of the history and physical conditions of the country as well as of those ancient and profound religious conceptions which are the glory of India and of all the Eastern world.[118]

The manifesto confirmed the Bengal School, if confirmation were needed, as the heir-apparent to traditional Indian art. *The Dawn Magazine* (April 1912) quoted it to silence opposition to the Bengal School.[119]

What Birdwood failed to see was the patronising element in his admiration for Indian art. A few years later he paid his own homage to ancient Indian Aryans in *Sva*, which Coomaraswamy praised in a private letter. However, the Royal Society of Arts incident led to Birdwood's loss of face: it also gave birth to the India Society, for years the outpost of Indian culture in Europe. The day before *The Times* letter, Havell had written to Rothenstein, suggesting a meeting to set up a society, 'for the aesthetic culture of India has beauty and interest hardly understood in Europe and modern India'.[120] He had already sent for details of the activities of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. With the support of leading cultural figures, the India Society was launched in 1910. At an early gathering, a proposal was made to 'keep out the undesirables'.[121]

Between 1909–13 the two societies kept in close touch, jointly publishing Mrs Herringham's copies of Ajanta. This was when Coomaraswamy shuttled between Britain and India. Planning a visit as early as 1907, he arrived in Calcutta in 1909. His two years in the city were devoted to cultural nationalism. At the height of the anti-Partition era, Coomaraswamy's powerful blow for the Bengal School gave it an added prestige. He also began a fine personal collection of Indian art; in 1912–16 the critic made a major contribution to the study of Indian painting by separating the Rajput style from the Mughal. He also claimed Rajput art to be entirely indigenous, as opposed to 'foreign' Mughal naturalism. This of course had implications for Hindu nationalism. In 1911, the United Provinces Exhibition at Allahabad showed 'old paintings' selected by Coomaraswamy from major collections. In this high tide of cultural nationalism, he sounded an unexpectedly hesitant note: 'a great responsibility now rests upon members of the Calcutta group, and upon the public for whom they work. What has been accomplished constitutes, considering the very adverse conditions obtaining in India a few years ago, and to almost the same extent at the present day, much; but it is not what the world has to expect from India'.[122] The savant's sudden loss of faith in the Bengal School had followed a dismissive article by Roger Fry.[123]

In 1910 Rothenstein decided to visit India in Mrs Herringham's company. He corresponded regularly with Coomaraswamy in India, who kept him abreast of developments and eagerly awaited his arrival. Before embarking on the voyage, Rothenstein sought out official reaction to it. At the India Office, his friend Sir Richmond Ritchie was pointedly lukewarm, for he was 'afraid that my sympathy for Indians and for things Indian would encourage the Nationalists, now beginning to be heard through Gokhale and Tilak . . .'[124] Rothenstein was urged to keep in touch with the officials. During Taikan and Shunso's visit to Jorasanko in 1903, they were kept under police surveillance. The Intelligence

Department also maintained a discreet watch over Rabindranath because of his opposition to the Partition.[125]

Rothenstein ignored the warnings. Havell welcomed his plan, asking him to look up Annie Besant in Varanasi, and gave an introduction to John Woodroffe. In India, Rothenstein joined Coomaraswamy, travelling together for a while. Rothenstein then met the Tagores – Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, and their uncles, Rabindranath and Jyotirindranath. The English painter was charmed by the 'phrenological' drawings of Jyotirindranath and arranged for their publication in London. He found the Tagore mansion 'a delightful house, full of lovely things, of paintings, bronzes, stuffs, and musical instruments. Their collection of Indian paintings was the best I had seen, made, as it was, by artists'.[126] From 1897 Aban and Gagan were engaged in creating a magnificent collection of Indian miniatures, a selection of which was published by the Indian Society in 1910.[127]

Havell kept abreast of events in India. Nivedita wrote him a letter of congratulation after the Birdwood incident. On her visit to England in 1908 she most probably saw Havell. In that year, when Havell realised that he would never return to Calcutta, he tried to persuade the Home Government to make Abanindranath's appointment permanent. But this ran counter to the Raj policy of limiting the number of Indians in senior posts. Indeed, in his letter to Coomaraswamy in 1908, Havell did not hold out much hope: 'Abanindranath will not get the Principalship at Calcutta after all. There has been a great deal of telegraphing from India Office to Simla about it; but the result is that Simla will probably have its own way as usual.'[128]

In 1909 Percy Brown, who ran the Mayo School of Art in Lahore, was offered the Principalship of Calcutta. He was learning Persian to study Mughal art and supported Indian artistic revival. Not brilliant but fairminded, after joining, he plunged headlong into the activities of ISOA. His wife was eager to take lessons in oriental art. So even after Brown's arrival, oriental art did not lose its impetus. At this time Abanindranath was seeking indigenous substitutes for imported paints helped by Iswari Prasad's expertise. The School report of 1909–10 tells us: 'a special feature has [also been] the preparation of the indigenous pigments. The results of this action are being watched with some interest, as the old Indian colours are remarkable for their brilliancy and permanence'. In 1910, *The Statesman* drew attention to Iswari Prasad's *Kṛṣṇa and Yasoda*, at the exhibition of oriental art, 'painted in true Indian pigments, in the hope that others may be led to follow his example and so obtain the beauty, clarity, and soft brilliance which they exhibit'.[129] Venkatappa, also from a painter caste, received a stipend to develop these pigments.

Though he played no part in the decision, Brown's appointment rankled with the orientalists. Havell described his successor to Rothen-

stein as a philistine with limited interest in Indian art, his membership of the India Society an unwelcome influence. Before Rothenstein's departure for India, Havell warned him against meeting the Tagores through Brown, for he 'has not treated Tagore fairly since he has been in Calcutta'.[130] In 1911, on Rothenstein's return from India, Havell invited him to dinner to discuss Abanindranath's proposed resignation from the art school and his aim of starting a school of his own. Another of Havell's frantic notes to Rothenstein complained of Coomaraswamy's growing indifference to the India Society. Havell also tried to persuade the Society to take up Abanindranath's case with the Secretary of State, Harcourt Butler. As for the Bengali artist, having been passed over, he saw his position at the school as invidious. And he did not need the money. Inevitably, there was a certain coolness between him and Brown from the outset. Finally, the Bengali artist resigned in 1915 over a trivial matter. His nephew, Jamini Gangooly, succeeded him as Vice-Principal on 19 June 1916.[131]

However, we learn from a confidential letter from the India Office to Havell of the compromise favoured by the Raj as early as 1911:

> it is deplorable that Tagore should be driven to the conviction that he must get out of government service if he is to do any real good. It may be that out of this will eventually be evolved a real and intelligent policy towards art in India; at present a liberal subsidy to an unofficial institution seems to be the best solution we can hope for.[132]

That institution was the Indian Society of Oriental Art, run by Abanindranath and Gaganendranath with lavish official support. Further government patronage was not long in coming: Queen Mary on her visit to Calcutta in 1912 acquired Abanindranath's *Tissa, Asoka's Queen* (Fig. 161); a special gazette announced on 2 June 1913, the King's birthday, the award of a CIE to the leader of the Bengal School of painting. The India Office had the satisfaction of keeping both sides happy.[133]

Exhibitions in Calcutta, Paris and London, and Madras

Iswari Prasad succeeded Abanindranath as teacher of oriental art at the art school. But without the guiding spirit, it never recovered its former glory. Brown restored a more formal system of training, and his deputy, Gangooly, resuscitated the fine arts section. The locus of oriental art shifted to the Indian Society of Oriental Art, where the teaching was entrusted to Nandalal Bose and Asit Haldar. The Society arranged illustrated lectures on ancient Indian art by Coomaraswamy and others. It encouraged craftsmen with assignments. But its overwhelming purpose was to publicise the Bengal School, led by Thornton, Blount and Woodroffe, friends of Abanindranath. In 1908, the better-known version

of Abanindranath's *The Music Party* was published in Okakura's *Kokka*, along with his pupils' works (Figs 162, XXIV). Woodroffe explained:

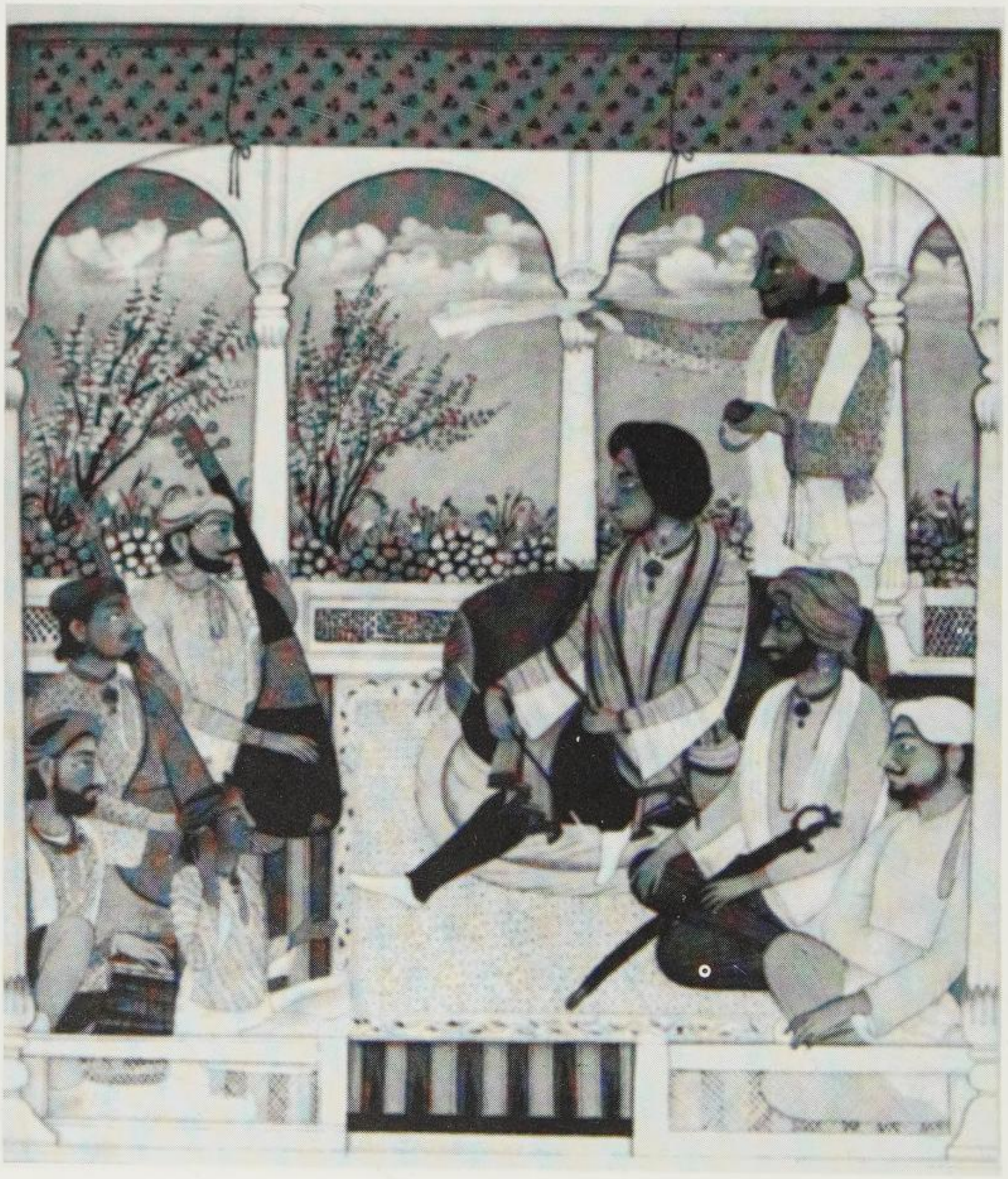
> This Society is doing good work by its endeavour to arouse in the India of to-day the beautiful spirit which inspired the artistry of her great past . . . Its earliest and best product is to be found in the work of Mr. A. N. Tagore . . . The beauty of his work is a sign of what may be given to the world . . . if the Indian people regain their artistic heritage and realise that their duty is not to borrow from others but to give of their own.[134]

161 Abanindranath Tagore: *Tissa, Aśoka's Queen*, chromolithograph (the original belongs to Her Majesty the Queen)

When Japanese critics hostile to Okakura dismissed the works as unoriginal, Woodroffe penned a spirited defence.

To popularise oriental art among the bhadralok, especially women who were unable to attend exhibitions or those who lived outside Calcutta, an ambitious plan for reproductions was launched. These were ordered from the *Kokka* press and *The Studio* publishers in London because of their quality, though local presses were used as well. From 1911, members received free copies of reproductions. The prints proved so popular in Bengal that Rs 500 worth were sold at the 1912 exhibition, making the artists household names. Hironmoy Roychaudhury and Asit Haldar produced plaster maquettes for four bronze panels based on cartoons by Nandalal. These and copies of ancient sculpture were sent to London to be cast in bronze.[135]

The most important function of the Society was to arrange exhibitions



162 Sikh School?: *The Music Party*, gouache

of oriental art in the city during the winter season. The Calcutta public was familiar with art exhibitions from the last century. But exhibition going had not yet become a habit in the capital, as in Bombay. The ISOA helped popularise exhibitions and wean the public from academic art, a 'remarkable record of progress' (1908–12), faithfully recorded in *The Dawn Magazine*. The initial year, 1908, augured well for the Bengal School in the midst of *swadeshi* agitation. Aurobindo Ghosh ran a powerful anti-government paper, *Bande Mātaram*. His pamphlet, 'Bhawani Mandir' (1905), inspired young revolutionaries of Bengal, who were, in Hobsbawm's words, 'some of the finest examples from Asia [of a secret revolutionary brotherhood]'.[136] In 1908 Aurobindo and his brother Barindra were convicted in the Manicktola Bomb Conspiracy case, and *Bande Mātaram* was closed down. The Raj steered an uneasy course between suppressing revolutionaries and placating adherents of institutional politics, though without necessarily making any significant concessions. But given the situation, artistic nationalism was preferable to bombs.[137]

The exhibitions were attended by the highest officials. During the *swadeshi* unrest, the Viceroys felt especially beholden to their subjects. Lady Minto, whose husband was appointed Viceroy in 1905 to calm *swadeshi* nerves frayed by Curzon's Partition of Bengal, visited the 1910 exhibition. Hardinge, the next Viceroy, who found cultural nationalism a welcome relief, narrowly escaped the assassin's bomb. He and the Lieutenant-Governor came to the fifth exhibition (1912). They bought works and were introduced to the artists. Lady Hardinge, an Arts and Crafts aficionada, was keen to meet Nandalal, the rising star of oriental art.

Hardinge remained impressed with the Bengal art movement, nominating Samarendra Gupta as an artistic adviser to the planners of New Delhi. Other officials and notables bought works. The highest price for a single work, for instance, was Rs 300 in 1912, a generous reward for a miniature.[138] Lord Ronaldshay, succeeding Carmichael as the Governor of Bengal in 1918, not only maintained the level of support but turned out to be a devoted champion of the orientalists, offering them a handsome subsidy for a journal:

> The modern school of painting in Bengal had attracted my attention at an early date as an example in the cultural sphere of reaction against alien domination which found its most violent and reprehensible expression in the revolutionary activities of the two chief secret societies . . . whatever the merits, or the demerits of, the work which these modern exponents of Indian art were producing, their object and the spirit by which it was inspired, seemed to me to be deserving of encouragement and support . . . [and in] 1919 I had discussion with two charming members [Abanindranath and Gaganendranath] of the famous Tagore family.[139]

From the outset, these exhibitions juxtaposed ancient Indian art and the Bengal School to assert cultural continuity. The Lieutenant-Governor, Lord Carmichael, lent his collection of ancient Orissan stone carvings to the inaugural exhibition of 1908. Abanindranath bore the incidental expenses of the show, supervising the hanging of exhibits. Jamini Gangooly's landscapes, Abanindranath and Gaganendranath's collection of miniatures, and Far Eastern prints dominated the show. The few works of the Bengal School by Abanindranath, Nandalal, Suren Ganguly, Asit Haldar and Iswari Prasad barely filled a wall. The highest accolade went to Suren Ganguly, who was awarded Rs 800 in view of his acute poverty.[140]

The second exhibition in 1909, held in Simla, the stronghold of academic art, as part of the Fine Arts Exhibition, is of great interest. Unlike the category, 'native' academic art, forty 'true' examples of oriental art were allocated a separate panel. Cultural difference was now a matter for celebration. *The Pioneer* enthused over Abanindranath: although English artists had treated Omar Khayyam, Abanindranath Tagore's show superior spirituality, charm and extraordinary subtle colour.[141] His efforts to create a new style were infinitely better than the mutations of South Kensington, it declared. The year before, the *Times of India* had made a similar point about Jamini Gangooly. Albeit Indian paintings were not as inspiring as Japanese art; but it was still possible to instruct the Indian to assimilate European art and yet add an Eastern touch to it. Essentially, what was called for was 'not the representation of a foreign style, but the boldness and freedom of the West grafted upon the colour and sense of the East'.[142] This, the paper volunteered, would further the cause of nationalism and develop Indian art along the right path, not the salon paintings of Bombay.

Modern Review proudly quoted *The Pioneer*, adding that 'This small collection is an important step in national art, Abanindranath's school was already famous East and West'.[143] People were paying more attention to oriental art than ever before, reported *Prabāsi* jubilantly. Its editor, Ramananda Chatterjee, suggested ways of drawing the public to the ISOA exhibitions: circulating cheap prints of the works with English and Bengali comments, and arranging special days for women. Did he know that the Bombay Art Society had similar arrangements for women in the 1890s?[144]

The third exhibition (1910) showed greater confidence, works of Abanindranath's pupils, Samarendra Gupta, Venkatappa, Hakim Mohammad Khan and the art critic, O. C. Gangoly filling an entire room now. The most faithful 'historicist' in the group, Suren Ganguly's best works were on display. He had died of consumption the previous November, leaving a young widow. His 'premature death . . . in the very bloom of his genius' was mourned by Nivedita. In spite of his poverty he had refused to compromise his artistic independence. Also

shown were Abanindranath's *The Dream of Shah Jahan*, Nandalal's *Mahādeva*, Asit Haldar's large painting, *Kṛṣṇa and Yasodā*, and Hironmoy Roychaudhuri's metal plaques. A friend of the Tagores, Hironmoy was a regular in these exhibitions before going to England to train as a sculptor. The visiting Japanese artist Katsuta also took part. Among old art were Nepalese and Tibetan bronzes from Havell and Percy Brown's recent additions to Mughal art at the gallery. *The Statesman* (an Anglo-Indian forum) confirmed that the Society fostered 'a purely national Indian art'. It defended the artists against a British critic's jibe that they were hardly entitled to the greatness thrust upon them, praising Abanindranath's 'surety of execution, poetic and dreamy grace, and subtle colour', Nandalal's 'forceful and noble conception' and Suren Ganguly's 'Hinduism manifest both in conception and colour of the fine works'.[145]

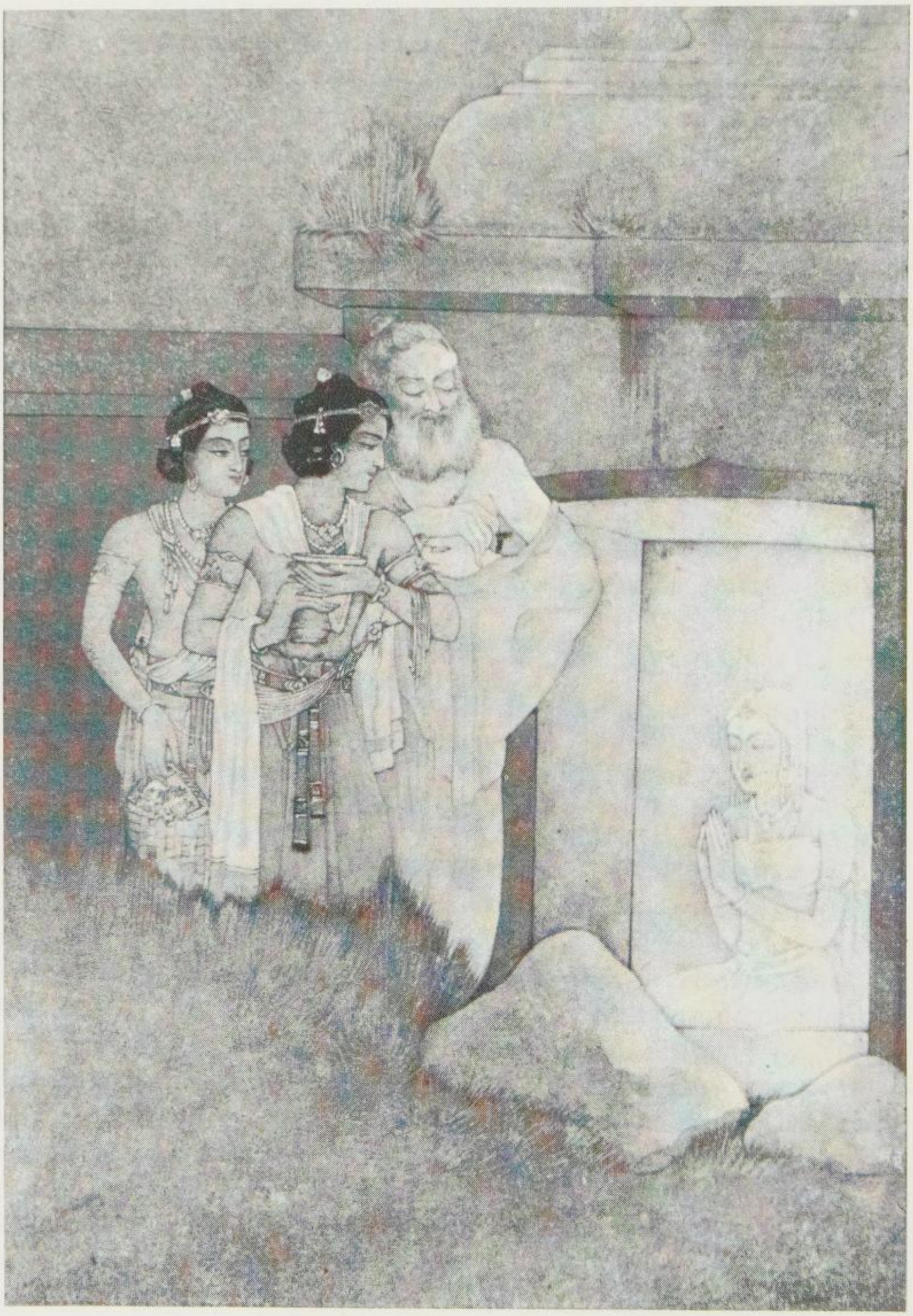
The exhibition was covered by Nivedita in *Modern Review*, her only review of oriental art, which she had done so much to nurture, as she died in 1911. She sought to set standards for judging oriental art by a balanced review of each artist, including acknowledging weaknesses. About a pre-colonial painting, she wrote that for the first time the viewer had a chance to enjoy the richness of tradition. Despite 'conventional iconography', Indian artists were able to use their 'freedom of imagination'. Modest in dimension, this old picture of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma was as imaginative as any in the West and 'so beautiful, and withal so original, that it cannot be forgotten'. Another, however, fell short on ideological grounds:

> Had the feeling of this picture been nobler it would have been ranked as a great masterpiece, but the sight of a man smoking a hookah while he is carried by women, is unredeemable, and we can praise only its decorative quality . . . Yet the quality of contrasting white against white, in the fashion of J. P. Gangooly's pictures of the river Padma, is very memorable, and we are glad to find it with historic precedent.[146]

The 'degradation' of women in this work failed her concept of decorum.

Pre-colonial art at the show was yet again meant to confirm the cultural pedigree of the Bengal School: 'Prepared thus, by our rapid *resumé* of the old Indian art, the modern room . . . could be seen in its true light, as a natural outcome and development of the old'. Venkatappa's *Śiva Rātri* (Fig. XXV), a work showing women at their daily rituals, was worthy national art. Suren Ganguly's 'masterpiece', *Lakshman Sen*, and his *Kārttikeya* (Fig. XXVI) were praised, while Nandalal exhibited a large number of works, including *Ahalyā* (Fig. 163), the tragic heroine of *Rāmāyaṇa*. Later, Nivedita described it as 'one of the finest achievements of its gifted artist. Whether we look at the petrified woman, or at the sage Vasishtha, or at the youthful heroes, we carry away the same impression; thus it must have been, for it could not have been so beautiful otherwise.

To produce such an impression is a great triumph for an artist of any age and experience'.[147] She used this treatment of Ahalyā to criticise Nandalal's heroic figures that verged 'upon the feminine'. This was seen as Abanindranath's weakness as well, for 'the man, who is a man, and could never, in untamed and irrepressible strength, be anything else'. In 1910 Nandalal was moving away from wash technique towards a hard-edged style inspired by Ajanta, whose monumental scale he



163 Nandalal Bose: *Ahalyā*, watercolour, who turned to stone because of a curse

admired. Nivedita sensed this in this passage; in *Bhiṣma's Vow* and *The Svyamvara of Draupadī*, 'his great technical power grew on us with every step. What we look for in this artist is the growth of a vaster, more masculine, and more synthetic treatment'.[148]

The virtuous *Sītā* by Asit Haldar was described as the most successful realisation of a Hindu ideal so far. But his Muslim subject, *Moazzim* (the call to prayer), was found to be beautiful but lacking genuine Islamic feeling. On the other hand, Hakim Mohammad Khan's portrait in a 'Mughal' manner was praised for its Muslim serenity, so unlike the 'mental intensity' of the Hindu artists. A reprimand was reserved for O. C. Gangoly, not one of whose figures could be 'seen in any natural position'. She advised him to give up 'the grave sin' of intellectual cleverness and subject himself to self-discipline. Finally, in the fusions of past and present in Iswari Prasad's traditional colours, the 'old favourites' by Abanindranath, and Gaganendranath's 'wonderful' impressionistic sketches she had a foretaste of her dream of 'the great Indian school of mural painting, historic, national and heroic'.[149]

The fourth exhibition (1911), held on a grand scale at Allahabad as part of the United Provinces Exhibition, included Coomaraswamy's miniatures, examples of work-in-progress at Ajanta and Gaganendranath's works shown at Simla. Formally not an orientalist, Gagan had profited from Taikan's presence, as seen in his economic black-and-white sketches. Hironmoy Roychaudhury contributed sculptures, while Venkatappa further explored traditional tempera colours. The fifth exhibition in 1912 was dominated by Ajanta; copies by Nandalal Bose, Asit Haldar and sketches by Suren Kar were spectacular. Ajanta inspired three large allegorical works, 'The Sea', 'The Earth' and 'The Air', designed by Nandalal and executed by him, Asit and Venkatappa. They also decorated the Pavilion in the Calcutta Maidan in honour of the visiting George V. *The Statesman* echoed Nivedita that these developments could 'lead to a splendid art of mural decoration for the civic halls and shrines of the future'.[150] A year before, on 16 October 1911, Percy Brown had disclosed in *The Evening Standard* (London) that the King's processional route in Calcutta was to be decorated by students of oriental art.[151]

By now, the ISOA enjoyed the support not only of the Raj but also of an influential section of the bhadralok. It had routed academic art but a more substantial victory required international recognition. London had not yet been taken, though the India Society was working on that problem. The first exposure of the Bengal School in Britain took place in 1911 at the Festival of Empire at the Crystal Palace to mark the coronation of George V. A showcase for colonial achievements, the India Society insisted on the inclusion of oriental art in the festival. A notable exhibit was of an Orissan *devadāsī* by Abanindranath (Fig. 164). His letter to Coomaraswamy in 1907 suggests the genesis of the work:

About the picture of the dancing girl, I don't think it will be wise to take it up just now when my head is full of Omar Khayy'am. I intend doing it in one of my quietest moments when my mind is quite free from all other influence. So far as I know the Devadasis are specially maintained for dancing before the idols. They are allowed to come out of the temple [as in Puri]. They came to our house, sang poems from 'Jayadeva' (*Gīta Govinda*) but absolutely refused to dance.[152]

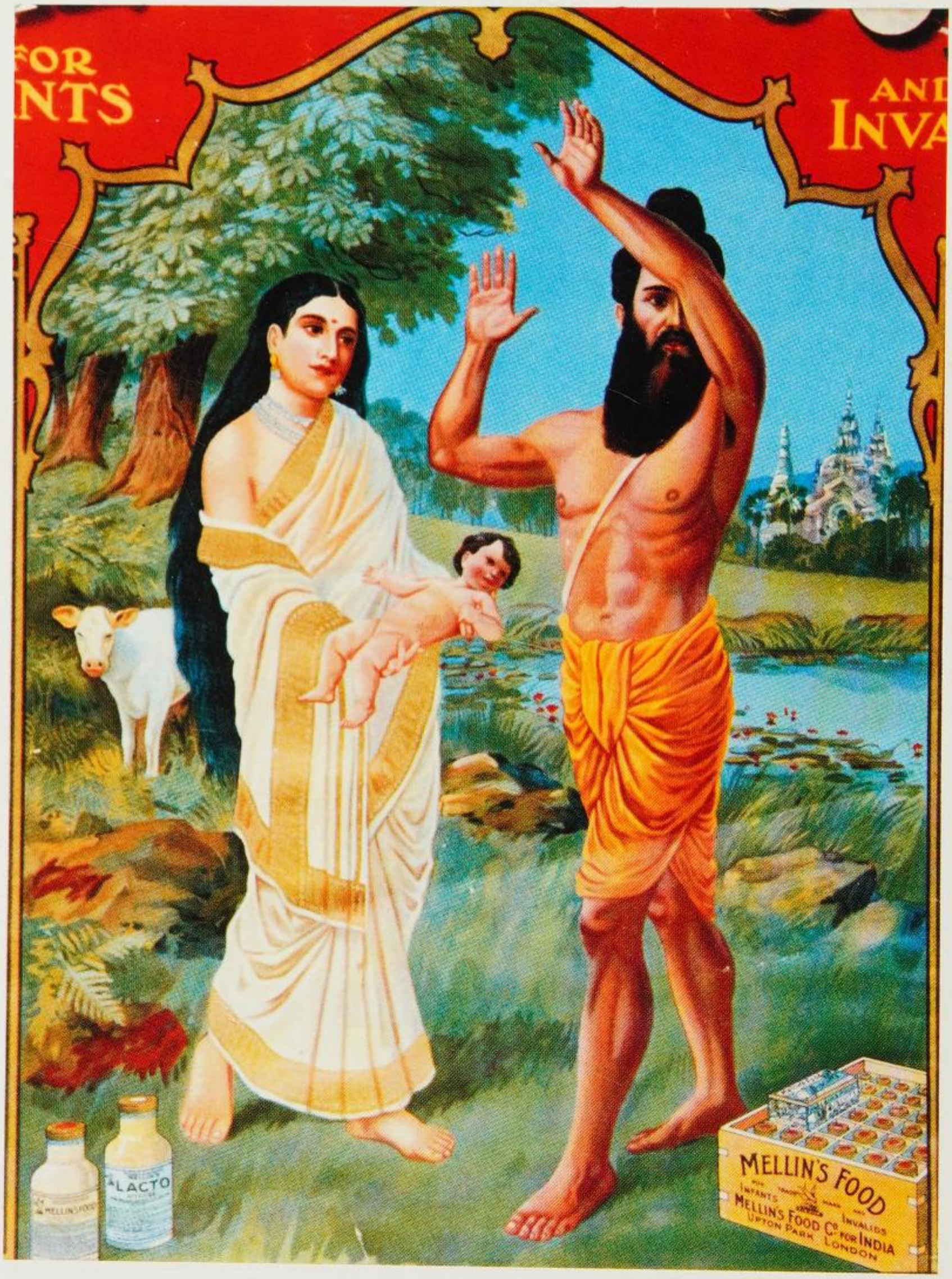
164 Abanindranath Tagore: *Devadāsī*, watercolour

XVI Ravi Varma: *Maharani Chimna Bai II* (1871–1958). Compare also her later portrait by Fyzee Rahamin, Fig. 62

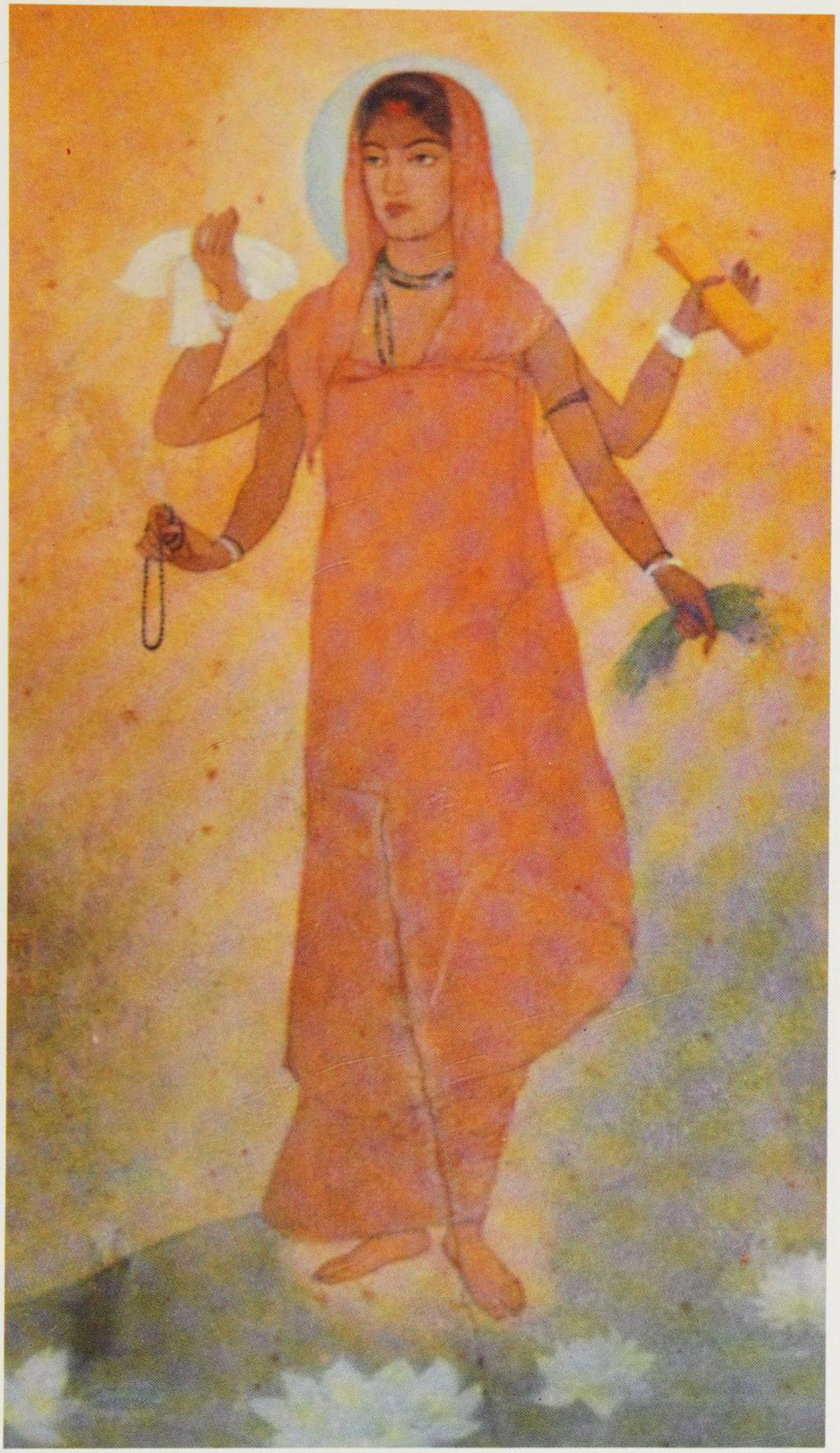
XVII Raja Varma: *Lake Pichola*, oil, one of the first landscapes by an Indian artist as an independent genre

XVIII Ravi Varma: *A Galaxy of Musicians*, oil

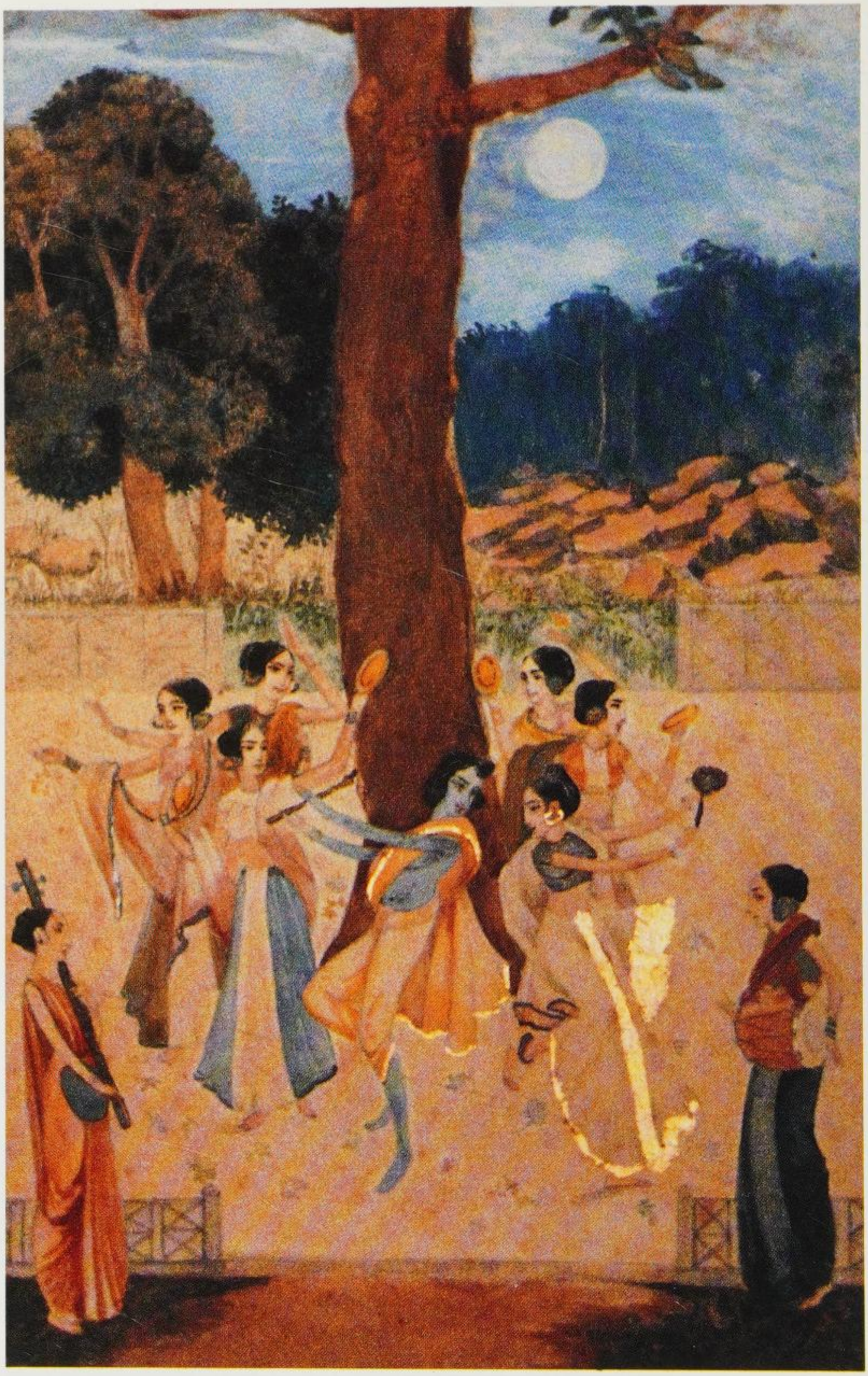
XIX Ravi Varma: *The Triumph of Indrajit*, oil, adapts the iconography of European Orientalist painters with their depiction of lust and cruelty for his own images of Indian past



XX Ravi Varma: *Birth of Śakuntalā*, poster for baby food

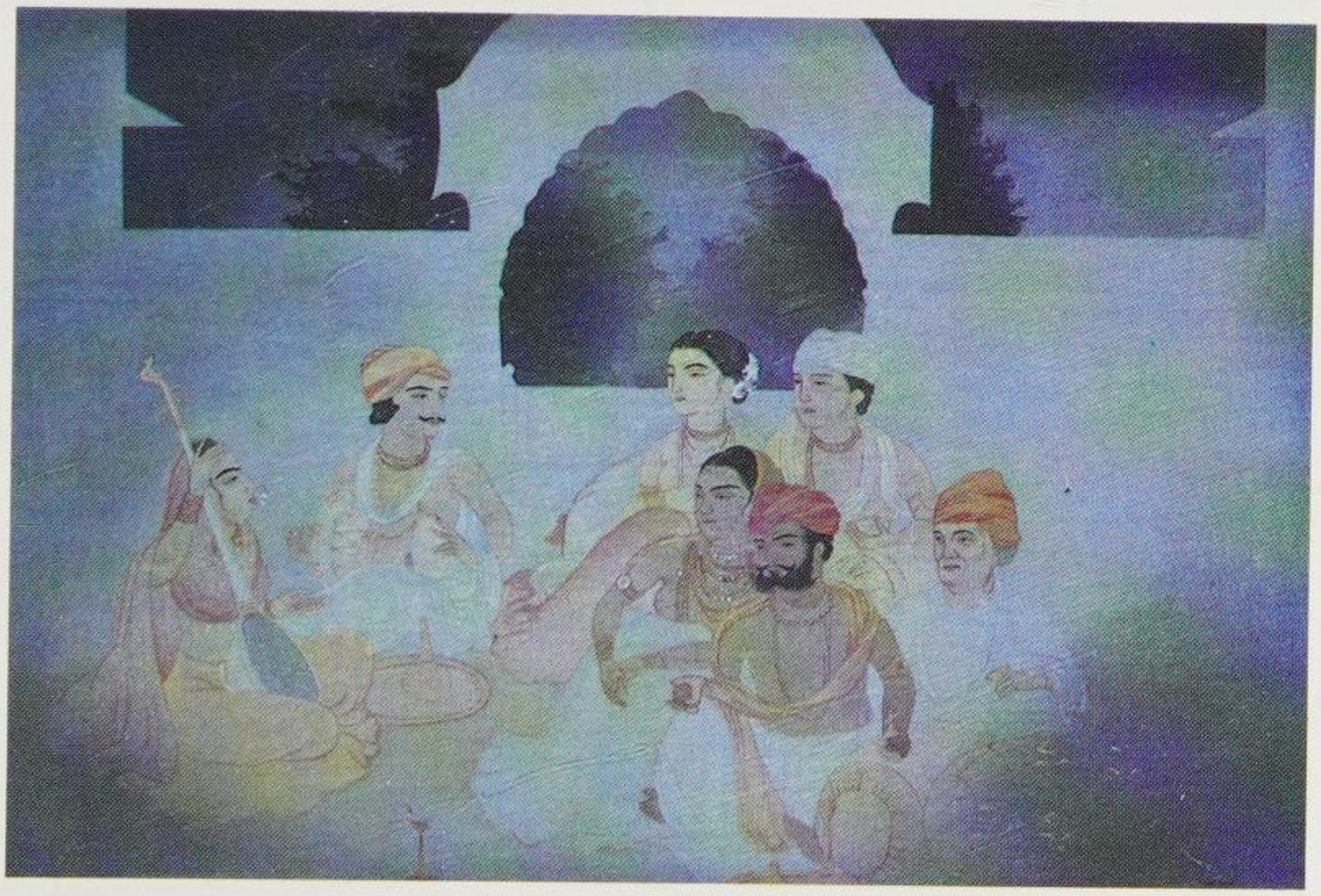


XXI Abanindranath Tagore: *Bhārat Mātā*, watercolour (Mother India as a Bengali lady), the creation of a nationalist icon

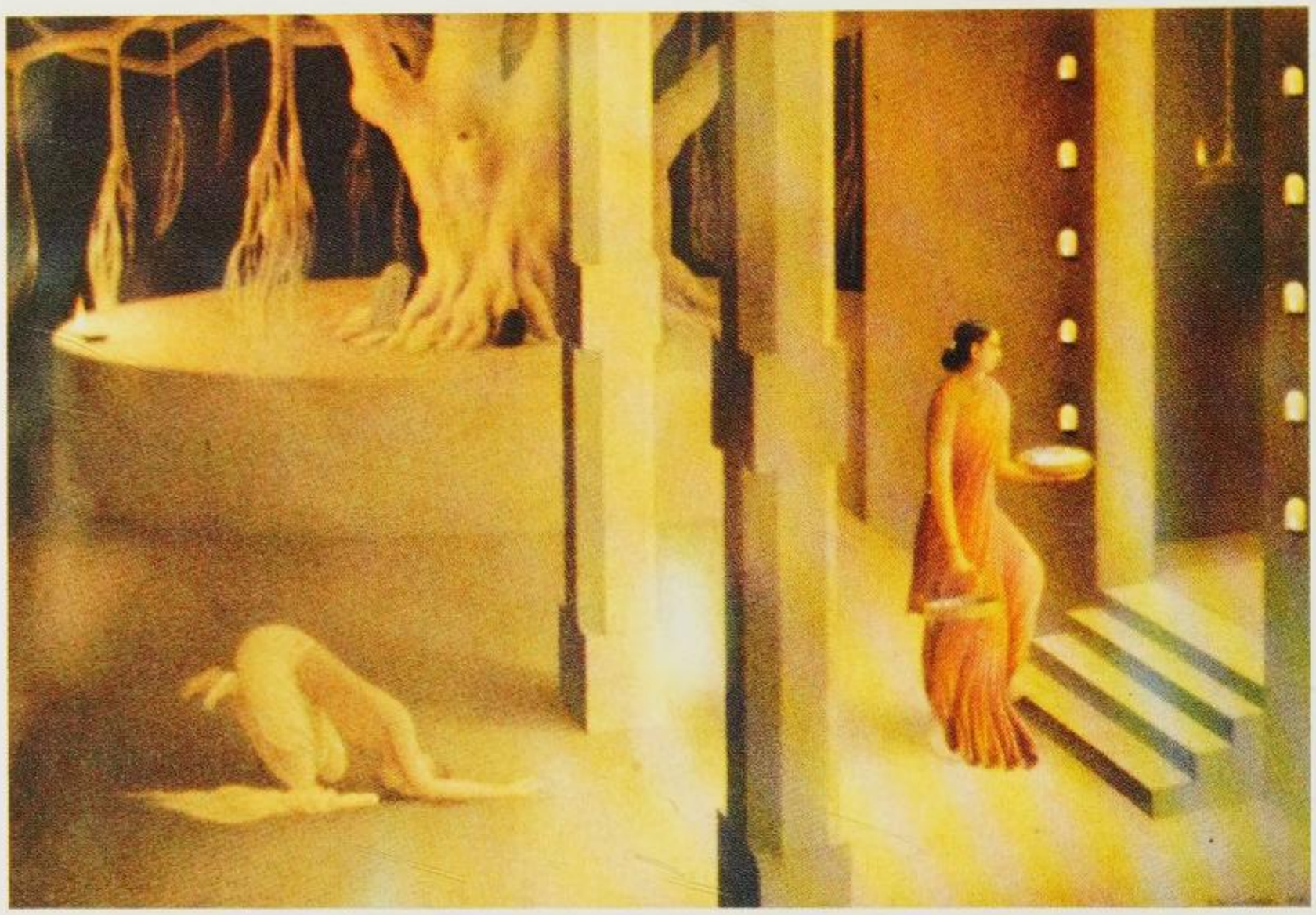


XXII Abanindranath Tagore: *Gīta Govinda*, watercolour with gold leaf added. Compare his *fin-de-siècle* beauty as expressing Indian spirituality with Varma's opulent women which had won the hearts of millions (Fig. 165)

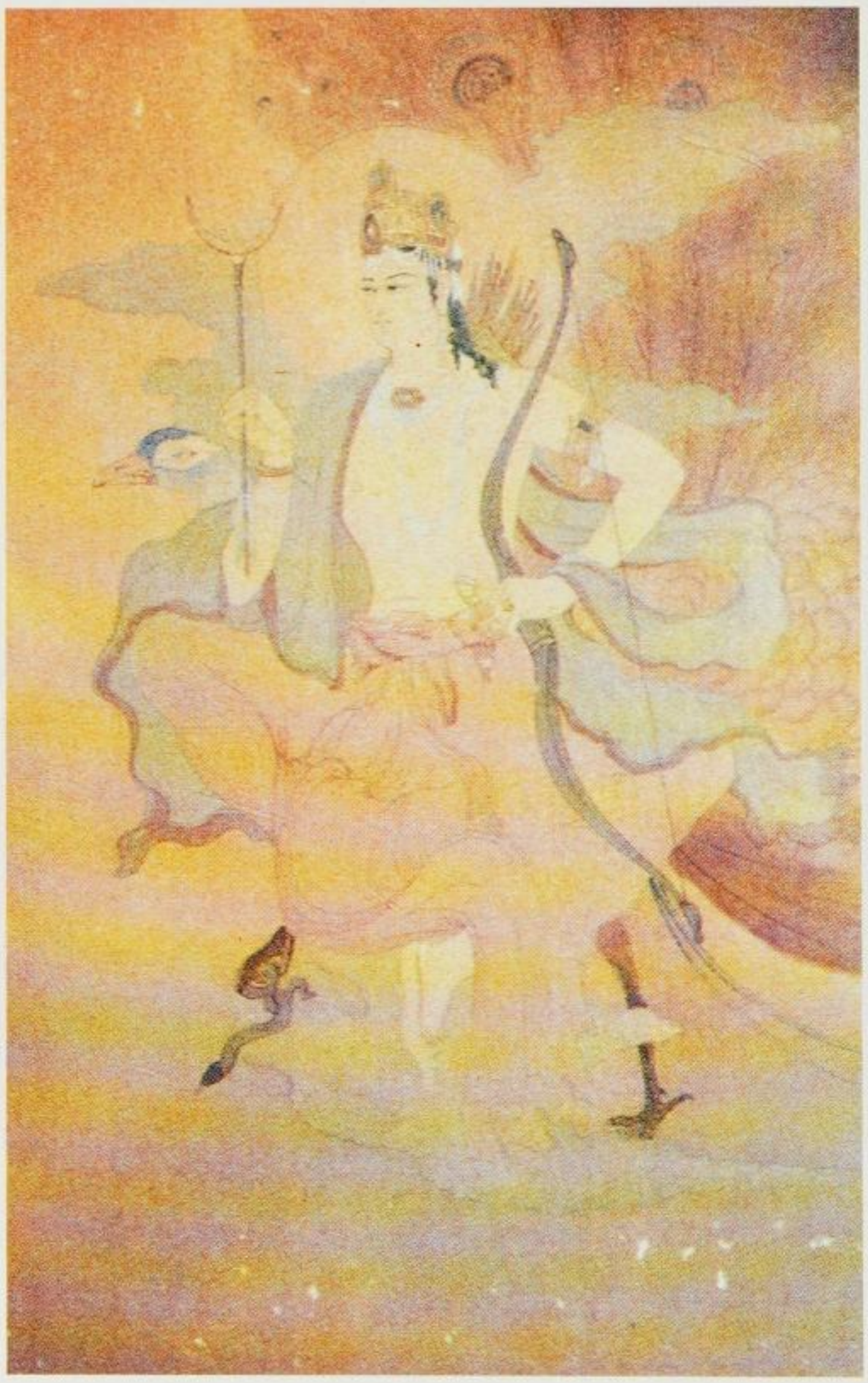
XXIII Abanindranath Tagore: Landscape with Bird, watercolour. Unlike Fig. 173 which is a faithful rendering of a Japanese watercolour, here the artist has evolved his distinct expression



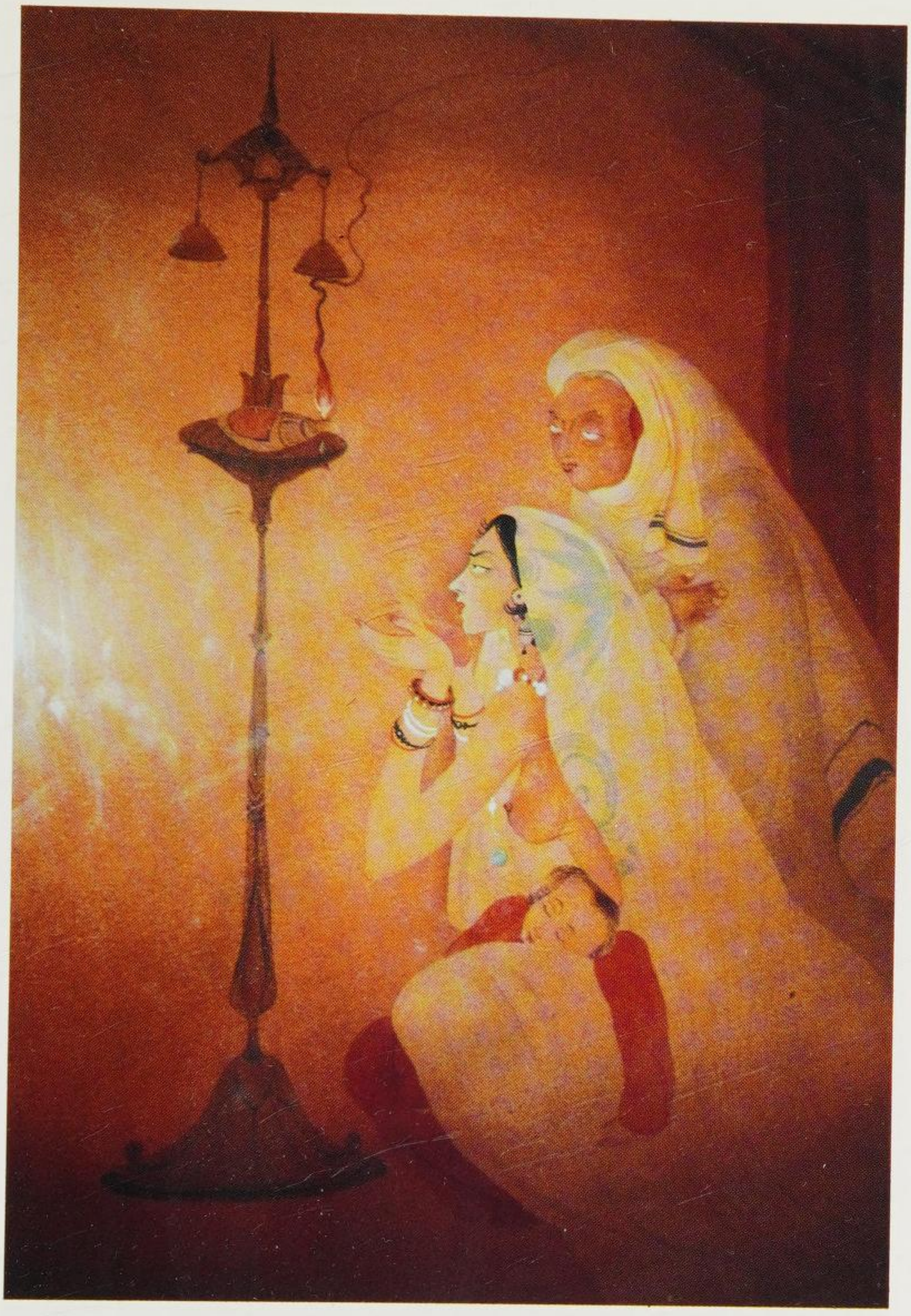
XXIV Abanindranath Tagore: *The Music Party*, watercolour (see its inspiration Fig. 162)



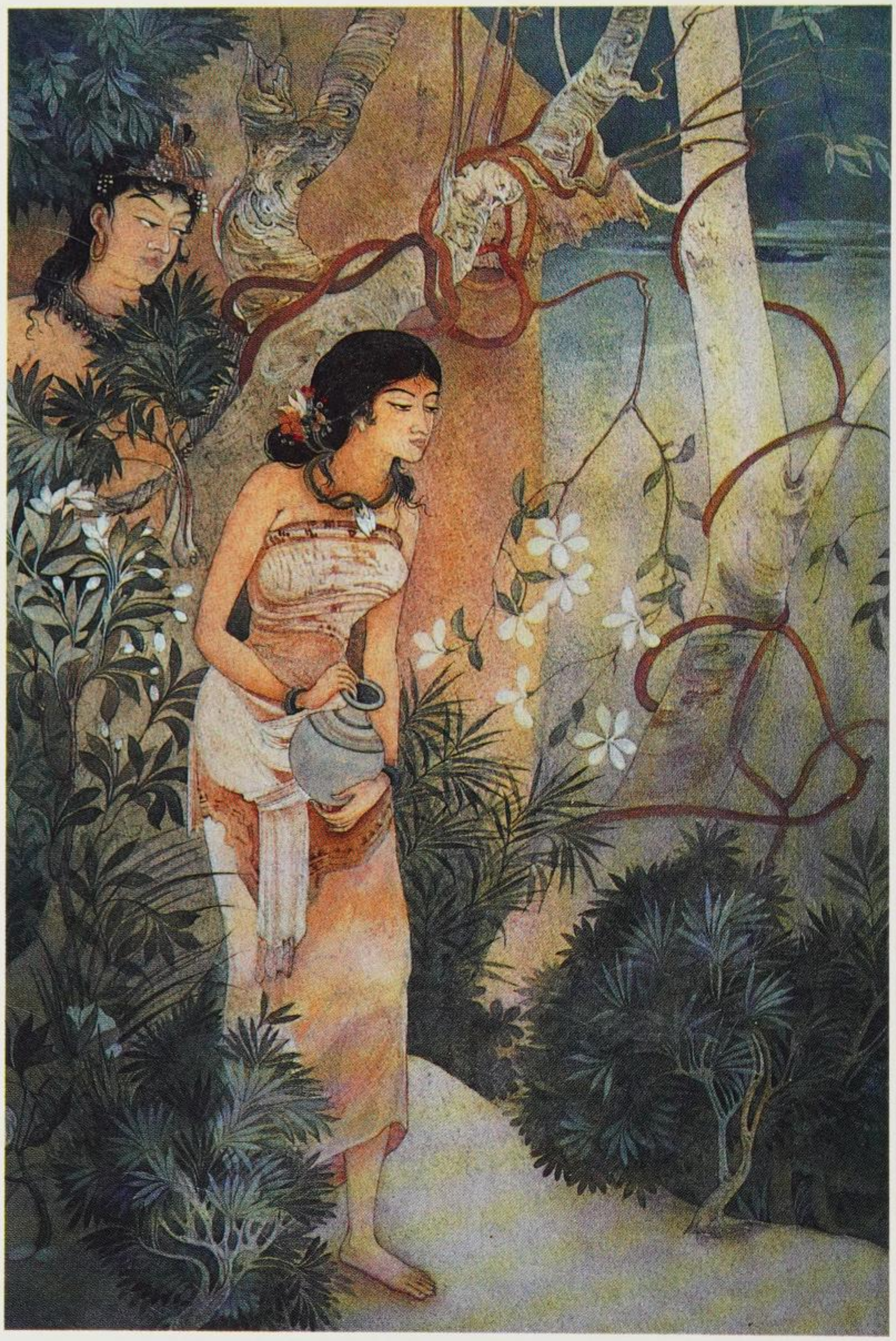
XXV K. Venktappa: *Śiva Ratrī*, watercolour, gives the artist scope to display his unusual treatment of light



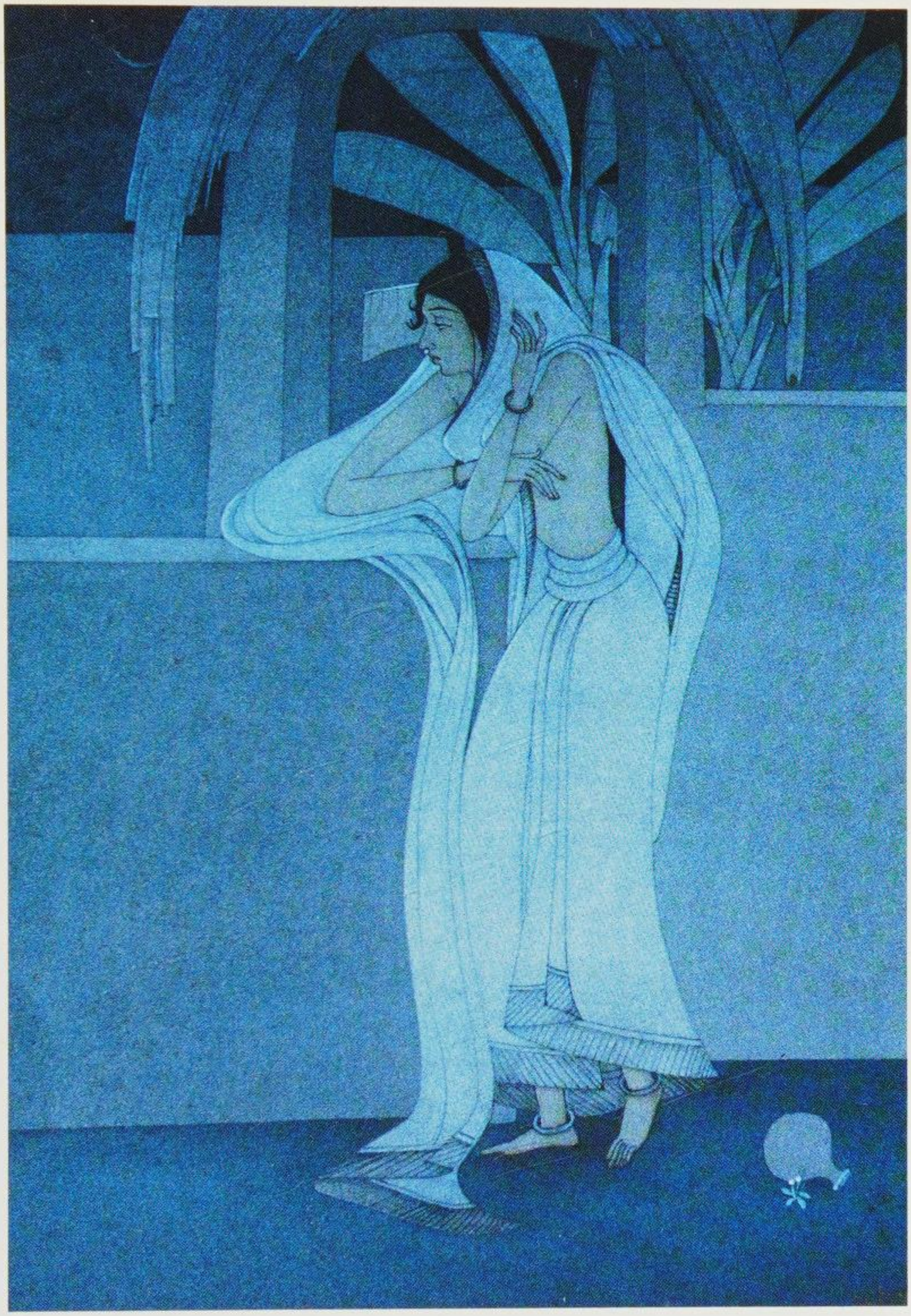
XXVI Suren Ganguly: *Kārttikeya*, watercolour



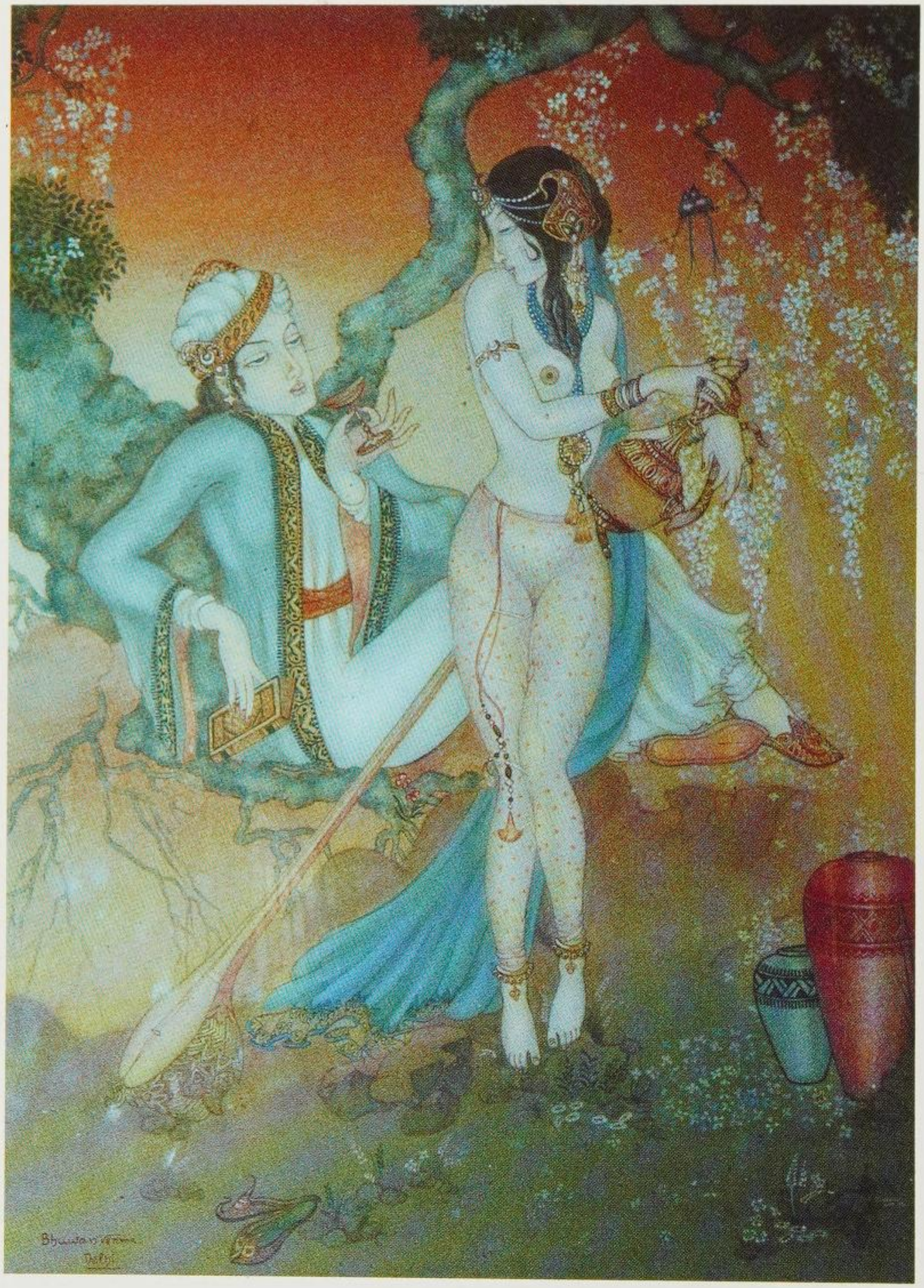
XXVII Abdur Rahman Chughtai: *The Divine Light*, watercolour



XXVIII Kshitin Majumdar: *Śakuntalā*, watercolour. Of the students of Abanindranath, Majumdar developed rich and sensuous and yet subtle combination of colours as seen in this and Fig. XXIX



XXIX Ksitin Majumdar: *Rādhā*, watercolour, which employs a range of blue tones to create a languid and erotic atmosphere that reflects Radha's longing and loneliness



XXX B. Varma: *Land of Love*, watercolour

The other noted work was Nandalal's line drawing, *Jagāi Mādhāi* (Fig. 165), about which Nivedita had written,

> it is another of the great technical triumphs of the artist and the school . . . [a work] at once so small and so perfect . . . Firm anatomical drawing, the strokes that in their thousands make hair, the definite and harmonious patterning of the turban . . . And how exquisite is the sum total! An extraordinary proof of the technical perfection of this tiny work, lies in the fact that under a magnifying glass, it is the modelling of the two faces that becomes most prominent . . .[153]

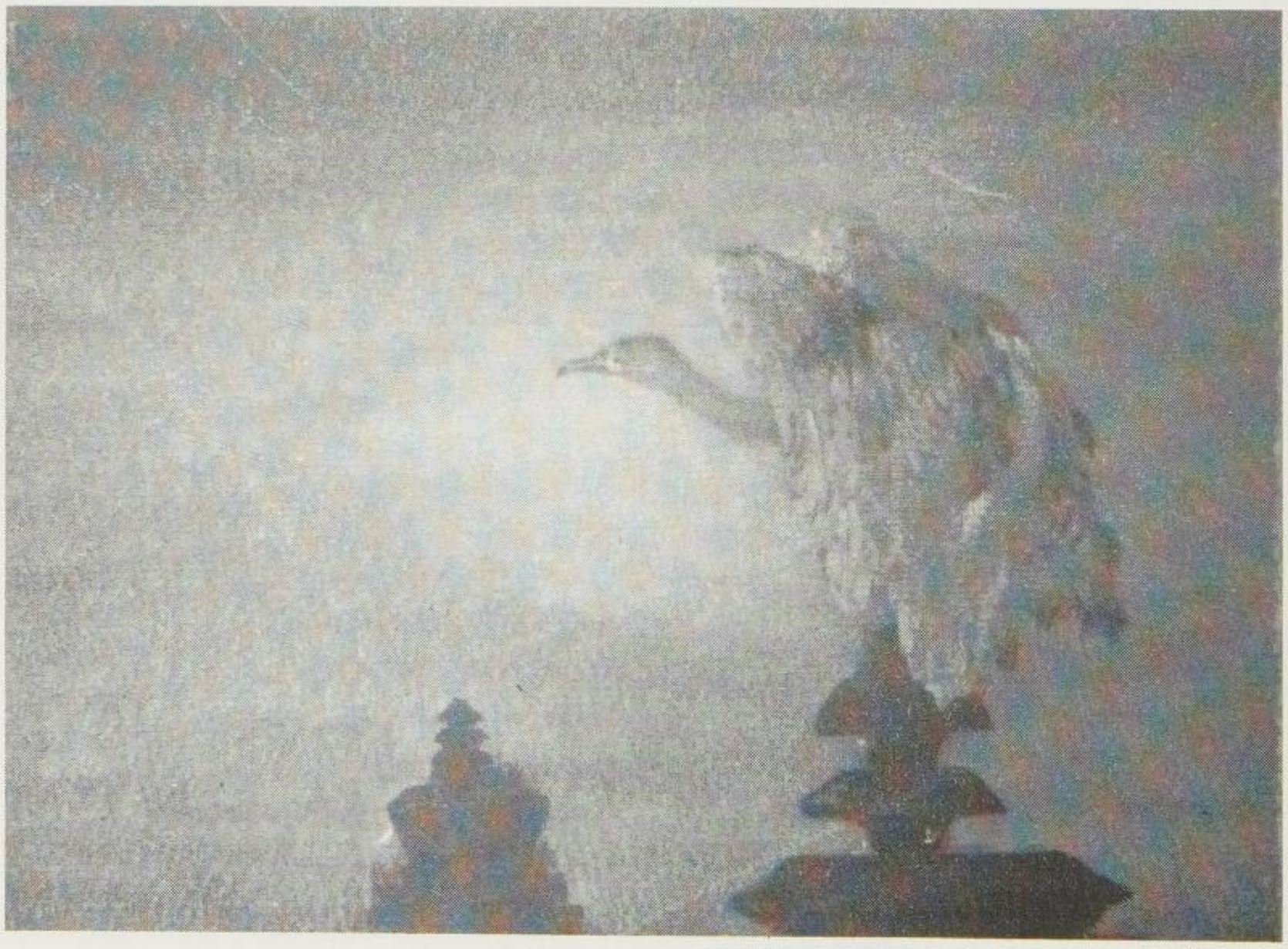
165 Nandalal Bose: *Jagāi Mādhāi*, pen and ink

Coomaraswamy's introduction to the catalogue was less certain about the movement:

> Their significance lies in their distinctive Indianness [but] . . . by no means free from European and Japanese influence. The work [of the School] is full of refinement and subtlety in colour, and of a deep love of all things Indian, but contrasted with Ajanta and Mughal and Rajput paintings which have in part inspired it, it is frequently markedly lacking in strength. The work should be considered rather as a promise than a fulfilment. So regarded, it has very brave significance for the future of Indian art.[154]

The Bengal School was greeted with silence by the English critics.

The first ambitious exhibition of oriental art in the West took place in Paris. A state occasion, it was opened on Sunday 8 February 1914 by the President of the French Republic, Raymond Poincaré. Suzanne and Andrée Karpelès, daughters of a French businessman in Calcutta, arranged for over two hundred works of the Bengal School to be shown at the Twenty-Second Exhibition of the Société des peintres orientalistes français. Later Suzanne was to be a pupil of the Sanskrit scholar Sylvain Lévi at Santiniketan. Andrée, a painter and admirer of Abanindranath, had translated his *Saḍanga* into French. This exotic exhibition was a great success with the French, to judge by Andrée's enthusiastic postcard to Abanindranath. (Later she recalled that the public thronged the Grand Palais to view the show.) Havell crossed the channel to attend the opening; later John Woodroffe joined him. *The Statesman* printed the headline: Exhibition of Indian Paintings in Paris – THE TRIUMPH OF ABANINDRANATH.[155]



166 Abanindranath Tagore: *Vulture on a Temple Pinnacle*, watercolour

Abanindranath's *Vulture on a Temple Pinnacle* (Fig. 166) was singled out by *L'Homme Libre* for its intimate and symbolic idealism, and the painter commended for his rare and penetrating strength. Other works by him included *Journey's End* (Fig. 167), *Kājari Dance*, and the *Kṛṣṇa Līlā* set. There were also *Rāmāyaṇa* pictures by Nandalal and works of Kshitin Majumdar and O. C. Gangoly. The French government expressed an interest in the exquisite, mannered painting *Journey's End* but was put off by the high price quoted by Gangoly, the Secretary of the ISOA.[156]

Among the reviews, Madame Hollebecque's in *L'Art Décoratif* was the most sympathetic. It was also the stuff of romance. She contrasted the 'brutal' stereotypes of the westerners that distorted real India, with the charming, grave and meditative art of *L'Ecole de Calcutta*. It revealed a harmonious civilisation, presented in a melancholy fashion around ancient cults and legends. She hailed the awakening of this nation, hitherto branded by Europeans as sterile, after centuries of decadence. The Bengal School did not reject the past *in toto* but revitalised the religion of *māyā* with a new quest for esoteric truths. Noting the absence of picturesque subjects so popular with European travellers, she explained that the artists represented nature idealistically, shunning its mundane

167 Abanindranath Tagore: *Journey's End*, watercolour

glories: hence the muted colours. They expressed the intimacy of 'internal life', their world image a synthesis of spiritual thought. Pre-Raphaelite influence was evident, in addition to Ajanta and the Mughals in Abanindranath. Hollebecque appealed to the viewers to lend them a sympathetic eye, especially to Nandalal, the most talented of Abanindranath's pupils.[157]

After Paris, the show toured Belgium and Holland, before arriving in England in spring. In London, the exhibition was held at the Imperial Institute in April–May 1914, under the aegis of the India Society. This was in the wake of the Society's publication of Rabindranath's *Gitānjali* and the award of the Nobel Prize to him. Paintings from English collections, including Abanindranath's *Tiśyarakṣitā, Aśoka's Queen*, lent by Queen Mary, were added to those shown in Paris. The exhibition offered a retrospective of the master from the early *Kṛṣṇa Līlā* to the recent illustrations to the *Rubay'yat*. Among his pupils, Nandalal, Suren Ganguly, Asit and Venkatappa were particularly well represented. But Iswari Prasad and Gaganendranath were not left out. The latter showed an ambitious cycle on the life of the medieval Bengali mystic, Shri Chaitanya, and impressionistic street scenes of Calcutta. They were done 'entirely under the tuition of Japanese artists', claimed *The Times*.[158]

English critics broke their silence with a guarded response that offended O. C. Gangoly. One must remember that the show came a few months before the outbreak of the First World War. Secondly, English critics viewed Indian art as clashing with the progressive tenor of life in the West. *The Times* observed that 'Mr Tagore, like many of his pupils, lacks power of line', whilst another critic felt that 'there is a vagueness of outline which conceals indefiniteness of thought and sometimes also a weakness of type'.[159] Yet not all comments were unfavourable. *The Athenaeum* considered Gaganendranath's work as 'more distinctly oriental, but less personal, as if he belonged to the category of everyday traditional craftsmen, among whom probably there is to be found the greatest body of tradition'.[160] *The Daily News*, however, relished the fact that none of the pictures was of the realistic 'Woman peeling Potatoes or Girl washing Dishes' type dear to some European schools. It enthused:

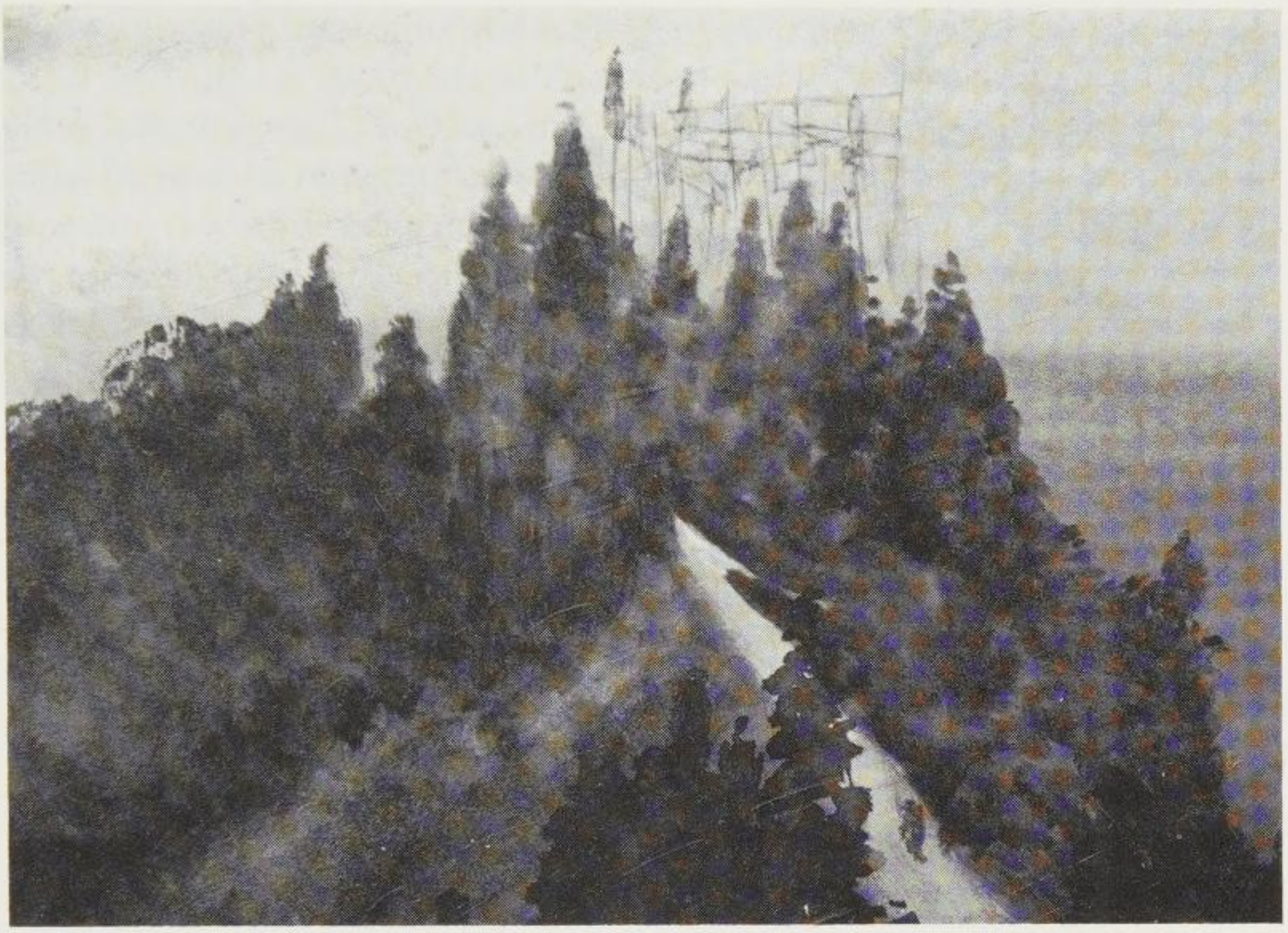
> It is the art of a people, ever aspiring to dwell in a profound tranquility, always beyond, who, in Blake's phrase, 'see, though not with the eye'.[161]

The Sunday Times found Nandalal's colours in rather high key, 'but the blending is so skilfully managed that the richness and brilliancy never descend into rudeness or vulgarity'.[162]

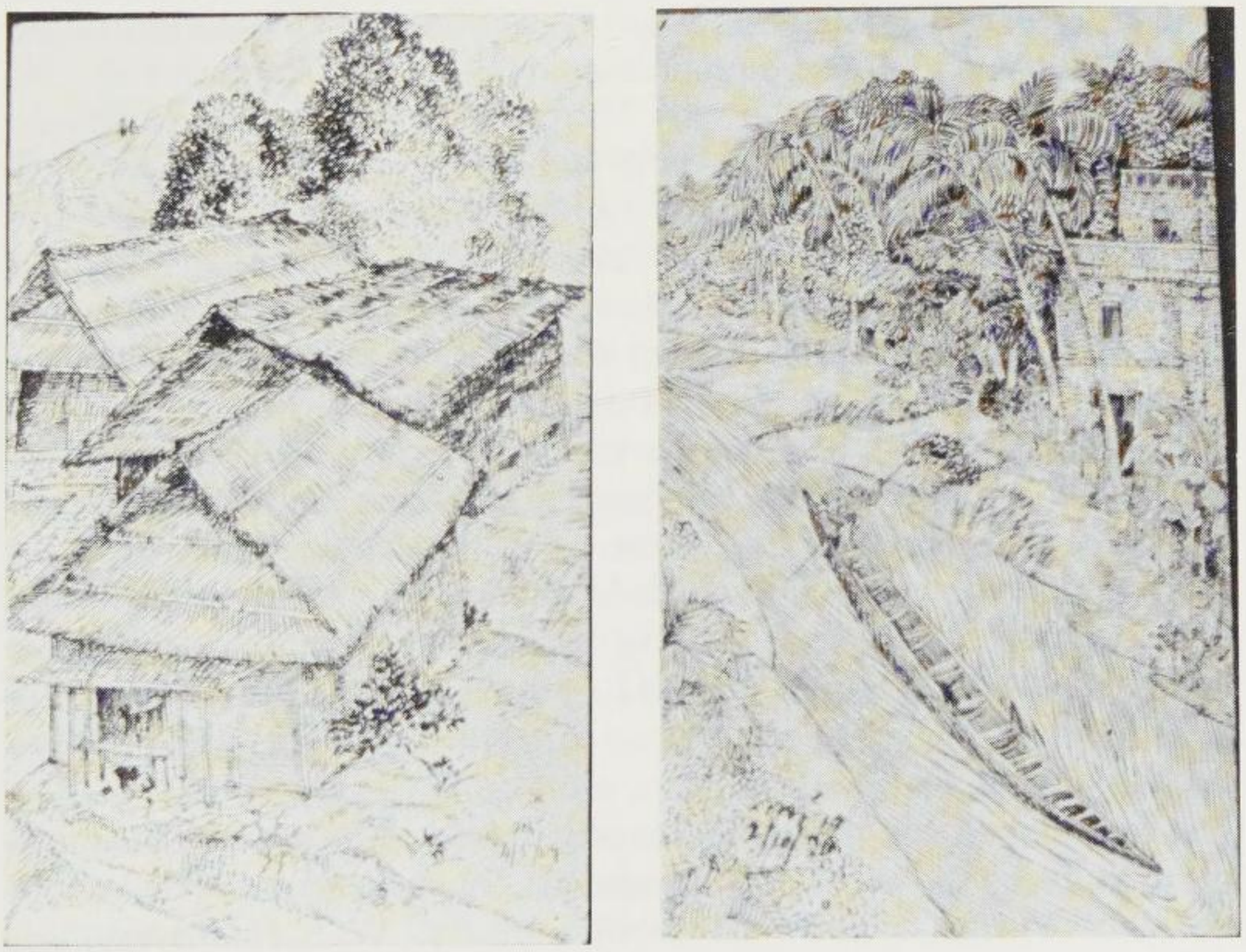
A significant new element in the ISOA exhibition of 1915 was the presence of two women artists. They were members of the Tagore family who took art classes at the Bichitra Club under Abanindranath's pupils. These were two of the early women artists of India, although women in Bengal began to take art lessons with private tutors in the last century. Of

these two, Sunayani Debi became well known for her 'naive' style based on Bengali folk art that anticipated Jamini Roy.[163]

The general section included Gaganendranath's Chaitanya paintings, Abanindranath's *Vulture* and other ones praised in European exhibitions of 1914 (Figs 168, 169). Abanindranath had an impressive list of new



168 Abanindranath Tagore: *Landscape* (Darjeeling?), watercolour



169 Nandalal Bose: *Landscapes*, examples of his pen and ink work

works, including an animal series, the first evidence of orientalist efforts to study nature. Despised until now, nature was taken up by the Bengal School to prove that it did not shelter behind mythology to shirk life study. An interesting artist at the exhibition was Sami-uz-Zaman, Abanindranath's second Muslim pupil to attempt 'historicist' explorations of his heritage.[164]

The 1915 exhibition travelled to Madras with 'the world famous works of the modern school of Indian painting'. In the south for the first time, the exhibition was backed by Annie Besant and C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, a prominent south Indian, while the ground was prepared with an advance notice in Besant's paper, *The Commonweal*. The exhibition was not only to inform the south of artistic genius in the nation, but also to create the 'nucleus' of an oriental art collection there. The last idea was soon taken up by the princely states of Mysore and Travancore.[165]

The success of the show, held at the Young Men's Indian Association from 19 February till 4 March 1916, was due to James Cousins, Secretary to the Theosophical Society. In 1915 he was in Calcutta to cover the ISOA exhibition for his journal, *New India*. As he recounted later:

> My preparation for appreciating the exhibition was the memory of the stir which certain pictures by a band of Indian artists had created in London and Paris a couple of years previously and some knowledge of their characteristics through reproduction. I was not however prepared for the shock of delight that I experienced when I found myself in the buzz of a vital movement, with its enunciation of ideals, its expectancy, its interaction of character and personality, that took me straight back to the days of the Irish Literary Revival, when every second person one met in Dublin had a poem or a play in some state of fulfilment in his pocket . . .[166]

Cousins and his wife joined Theosophy through the Irish Literary Movement. They heeded the 'call to India' by editing *New India* from Adyar. Moved by the vision of Asian unity, they agreed that while 'the Art of India should be enriched by the advancement of technique and knowledge from the West . . . [the] vision [of the Indians] must be their own'.[167] Cousins met Coomaraswamy in India and later he got to know O. C. Gangoly. He learnt about the new art movement in *Modern Review*, relishing its 'naive spirituality' expressed in quiet tones and simple themes. But the Irishman realised that these were not merely works of artists 'whose personal distinctions were held together by a temperamental and technical unity, but I was witnessing that exciting and incalculable thing such as I had experienced in [Ireland] . . . the awakening of a gifted nation to recognition of its artistic past . . . to emulate, and in some places to equal, ancestral achievement'.[168]

Reactions to the works in Madras were mixed. A European Theosophist, meaning to buy a couple of works, was so enchanted that he bought six. But the Principal of the art school in Madras, W. S. Haddaway, was

not impressed. 'The best work in painting and drawing which India has produced in modern times is undoubtedly the work of this Group of Bengalee Artists', he conceded, 'but to dignify the movement as the work of a "School of Painting" is most inaccurate'. He did not explain why he thought so. O. C. Gangoly, always ready to take umbrage, sprang to the defence of the group, pointing out that it was a coherent school in terms of style, whatever one may think of its merits. The Pre-Raphaelites were very different in their approach and output and yet 'they agreed upon certain fundamental principles . . . [and] they are all classed under one school'. Haddaway's apology was double-edged:

> When I read Mr. Gangoly's letter in New India of the 21st instant, I agreed with him that I had perhaps obscured the real significance of the Indian pictures exhibited by questioning the Artists' right to be classified as a 'School'. The significance of the work seems so very clear to me that I fear I jumped to the conclusion that it would appear [the] same to others.[169]

Despite the fanfare and lively controversy, very few works were sold.

Orientalism spreads to the rest of India

Cousins served the cause with singular devotion, often exhibiting oriental art in high schools, turning class rooms 'into temples of beauty' for a few days. In 1924, he persuaded the Jaganmohan Chitrasala in Mysore (Ravi Varma's stronghold) to found the first gallery of modern Indian art; later he played a leading part in a gallery for Venkatappa in Bangalore. In 1935, Sri Chitralayam Gallery at Trivandrum (another stronghold of Varma) opened a section on oriental art.[170]

In 1924, a travelling exhibition of oriental art was organised by the American Federation of Art. O. C. Gangoly remarked, 'To America belongs the unique distinction of housing the most representative collection of old Indian art [in Boston]. This liberality of outlook has qualified America to understand the message of Indian culture to a degree impossible in Europe where racial and political prejudices [obscure] aesthetic judgement'. Therefore, the surprising American indifference to the Bengal School would be corrected by the show, hoped Gangoly.[171] In 1925 on his visit to Europe Cousins acquainted connoisseurs in Rome and Florence with the Bengal School through prints. But when he lectured to the Société des amis de l'Orient in Paris on the Bengal School, the audience felt apprehensive. He had been preceded by Solomon of the Bombay art school, who claimed to have initiated an authentic Indian revival. Solomon was followed by a 'self-styled leader of an Indian art movement [Fyzee Rahamin?]'. When this man 'set up his oily messes, the friends of the orient felt that they were being dragged into the category of enemies'.[172]

In 1928, Cousins exhibited sixty paintings of orientalists from all over India at the prestigious Athenée gallery in Geneva. In Brussels, 'close beside the Indian gallery was one of the vast canvases of Jean Delville, the famous Belgian painter, but we managed to shut off its overpowering influence by screens'.[173] The show was popular and one 'lady told me . . . that she sat for hours just bathing in the exquisite spiritual and aesthetic beauty of India. Another made the discovery that the exhibition was full of love without eroticism'. The Dutch journalist A. J. Leivegoed arranged for their show in Holland. A future gallery of Indian art was planned, and Cousins was confident that India would be the world mentor in tempera.[174]

In the 1920s, the most spectacular conversion of an Indian salon painter to oriental art was that of Fyzee Rahamin during the Gandhian upsurge. A pupil of Sargent, Rahamin's oriental art was not confined to historicism, as with Muller, Dhurandhar and Gangooly; he sought to revive Rajput painting, as was done by the Bengal School. His conversion is not easy to date with precision but his marriage to the leading singer Atiya Begum had some part in it. He embraced her religion, Islam, and illustrated a book on Indian music by her. Fyzee Rahamin's Ragamala paintings were shown at Tooth's in London in 1925 and two of his paintings were acquired by the Tate Gallery (Fig. 170).[175]

In the 1920s Cousins backed young talents and related one such talent-scouting activity with Gaelic charm:

> I was piloted through narrow streets odoriferously unclean, by narrow dingy passages and up the stairs into an untidy room. But in a few moments, squatted on the carpeted floor, I realised that the untidiness was firmamental, and, like all good firmaments, held orbs and galaxies of beauty, the paintings of the artists who sat with me, each, like a creative deity, presenting his constellation for my scrutiny. Thus began a friendship of the soul with a genius for bringing the best out of young people who felt the impulse to expression in painting . . .[176]

That genius was R. Rawal, the editor of *Kumār* in Gujarat, 'then at the beginning of a career that made a sub-province art conscious'.

The anti-Havell Bombay art school stood for a specific approach: fusion of Indian art with 'western technology'. First enunciated by Burns in 1909, the idea was expanded by Solomon in the 1920s. However even in Bombay, Ravishankar Rawal (1892–1978) found such an approach unacceptable. Highly talented, Rawal enrolled at the Bombay art school, though his postmaster father wanted him to be an engineer. As a child Rawal was inspired by Varma's paintings at the Bhavnagar Palace. After difficult early years Rawal won the silver medal of the nationalist, Gujarat Sahitya Parishad in 1915. Then followed the Mayo medal of the art school, and the Bombay Art Society prize in 1916. At this time Rawal painted the European principal of a local college, for which he received

170 S. Fyzee Rahamin: *A Rajput Sirdar*, watercolour. Compare Rahamin's previous incarnation as academic artist, Fig. 62

the large sum of Rs 1200. His life as a salon-painter seemed assured.[177]

It was a sign of the times that Rawal did not pursue the expected career. Instead he moved back to Gujarat in 1919. Although ill health was a factor, no Gujarati remained unaffected by the political developments. Mahatma Gandhi's first three campaigns had been launched, securing his all-India reputation. In Gujarat itself, the farmers of Kheda were led by him. He patched up a compromise between striking mill-hands of Ahmedabad and the Sarabhais, the mill-owners. Following the Amritsar Massacre of 1919, Gandhi declared 'total war' on the Raj and launched his nationwide Non-Cooperation campaign. Rawal, who was art tutor to the Sarabhai children, became his disciple. The Mahatma urged Indians to shun all links with colonial institutions. Renouncing academic art was Rawal's way of following the Mahatma (Fig. 171). In 1922 Rawal recorded faithfully the celebrated trial of Gandhi after the Chauri Chaura incident. In the 1930s, Gandhi entrusted Rawal and Nandalal with the decoration of the Haripura Congress venue.[178]

There was a further reason why Rawal turned to oriental art. Gujarat had long and close associations with Bengal, primarily through the Tagores. The link was forged by the Sarabhais, who were close to Rabindranath and the nationalist circle of Bengal. Gandhi reinforced this link with his visits to Santiniketan. Believing that only oriental art could truly portray Gujarati life, Rawal turned his back on art school training and moved towards the Bengal School. He set up an informal studio with twenty-four pupils in a tiny room above the *Kumār* press. As part of nationalist effort, he waived fees of the pupils who were unable to afford them. James Cousins, who visited this studio, met Rawal's pupils, Kanu Desai, Somalal Shah (Fig. 172), Rasiklal Parikh and Chaganlal Jadav. Rawal squatted on the floor in the Indian fashion while teaching. Later a number of Rawal's students finished their art education at Santiniketan under Nandalal. Even later Rawal met Abanindranath. Although the Gujarati artist turned to oriental art, he did not display a closed mind. Rawal regularly borrowed European art journals from his painter friend, Bacchubhai Molani.[179]

Cousins championed Abdur Rahman Chughtai (1897?–1975) from the Punjab. The most outstanding Muslim artist, Chughtai contributed to the growing Muslim cultural nationalism. Though a Muslim, the landscapist Abalal Rahiman had not treated Islamic themes. Nor did Aban's pupils, Hakim Mohammad Khan and Sami uz-Zaman, engage in a quest for identity, even though they had turned to Mughal art. Fyzee Rahamin preferred Hindu themes. But Chughtai was the first Muslim to use Muslim classics in a personal manner, conjuring up a *fin-de-siècle* voluptuous decadence to express Muslim feelings of degeneration under colonialism.

Chughtai learned Islamic ornamentation from a humble artisan, Baba Mir Baksh, attached to a local mosque. In 1911, he joined the Mayo

School of Art in Lahore, where Samarendranath Gupta, a pupil of Abanindranath, was Vice-Principal (Fig. 173). Chughtai's father's death forced him to leave school and assume family responsibilities. For a while, he made a living as a photographer, then as a drawing teacher. Chughtai came to the attention of Lionel Heath, the Principal of the Art School, eventually becoming the head instructor in chromo-lithography.[180]

171 R. S. Rawal: *Symphony of Life*, watercolour (note the influence of Ajanta)

172 Somalal Shah: *By the Wayside*, watercolour

Chughtai traced his lineage to the Persian architects at the Mughal court; in 1916, he visited Delhi to view Mughal architecture in which his ancestors had played a part. His identification with the Mughals was part of the Muslim upsurge in response to Hindu nationalism and the worldwide Pan-Islamic movement. Muslim fears of a Hindu-majority India were given recognition in the separate representation for Muslims (the Morley-Minto Act of 1909). In 1916 Chughtai also visited Calcutta to gain further experience in lithography, where he met Abanindranath and his pupils, 'who render great services in modern art'. Abanindranath

173 Samarendranath Gupta: *Aśoka's Queen Casting a Spell on the Bodhi Tree*, inspired by Abanindranath's subject (Fig. 161)

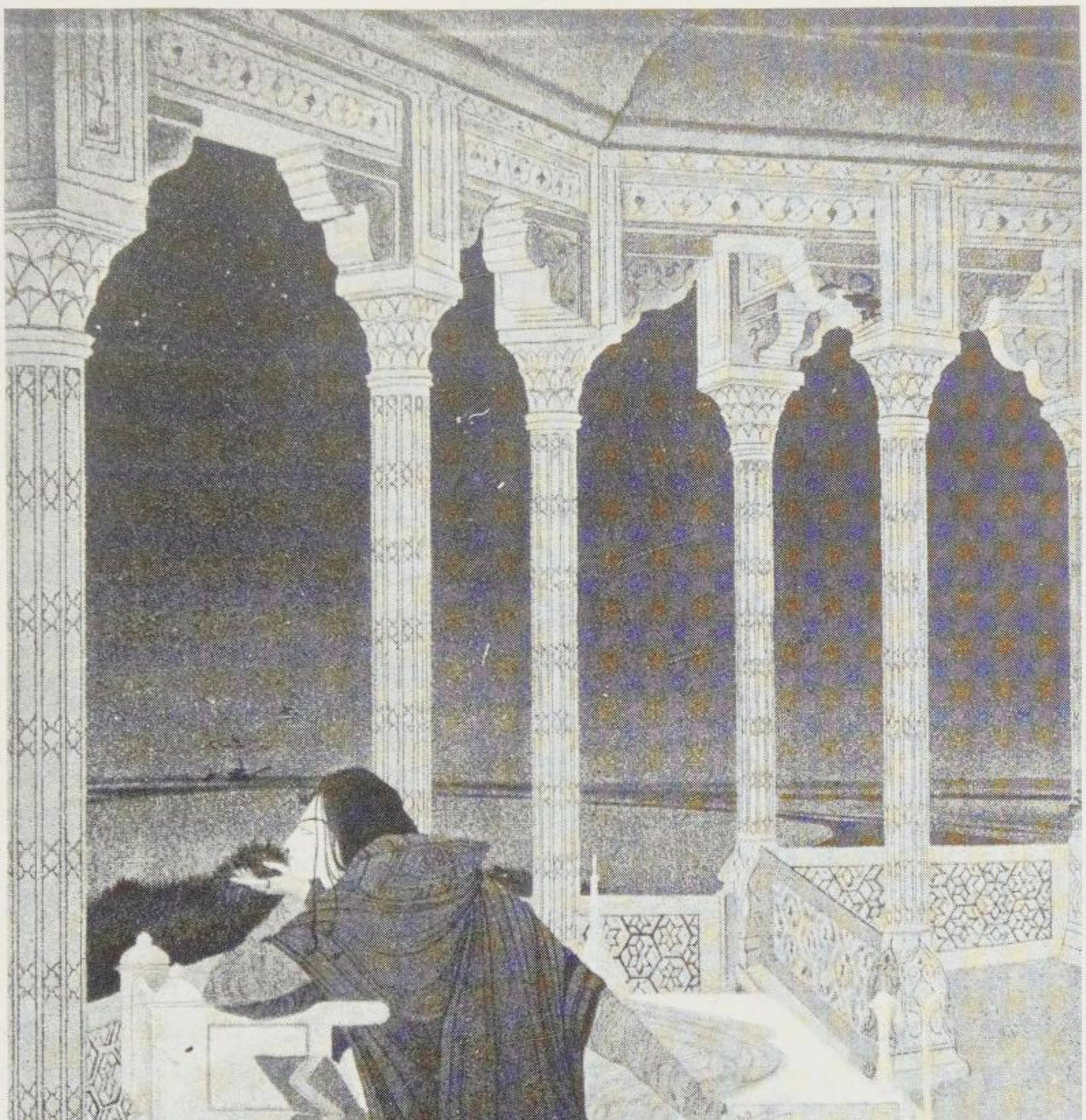
hoped to promote oriental art in the north-west through Chughtai; the Muslim artist found the Bengal experience exhilarating. Even as late as 1951, the year Abanindranath died, Chughtai paid homage to him: 'I hope you will enrich me with your valuable suggestions . . . my feeling for your art is unique and in spite of thousands of revolutions it has not changed a bit'. For his part, Chughtai's remarkable draughtsmanship was swiftly recognised by the orientalists. In 1916 his first painting in an 'oriental style' appeared in *Modern Review*, followed by *Bhārati* in 1917. In 1920 Chughtai consolidated his position among orientalists at the Punjab Fine Art Society (Lahore). By the 1920s he had become renowned. *Indian Daily News* singled out his dazzling works at an ISOA exhibition though O. C. Gangoly claimed that he failed to pick out works of outstanding merit in Chughtai's 'prolific multiplicity of one groove of ideas'.[181]

Chughtai's early work, *Jahanara and the Taj* (Fig. 174), shows the influence of Abanindranath's *The Last Moments of Shah Jahan*. As a historicist, it would have been difficult for Chughtai to ignore the pioneer revivalist in India. In retrospect, Chughtai viewed this influence as insignificant since he felt that Abanindranath's use of Muslim literary sources lacked a genuine Muslim experience. He complained: 'I painted from the Rubayy'at but Bengal had already put its stamp on it'. However, imbued with Islamic nationalism, he saw his own vision of the Islamic past as more authentic: 'My paintings not only paint Omar Khayyam's thoughts but embody the Islamic values which were part of me . . . On account of their background, the emphasis [of the Bengal School] was different. Therefore my work confirms our values as does Rubayy'at'.[182]

Such an assertion of artistic authenticity, a basic tenet in nationalist self-definition, was a counter-response to the claims of the *swadeshi* doctrine of art. Decades earlier, O. C. Gangoly had similarly dismissed Arnold's life of the Buddha as cultural ersatz. Yet these claims of authenticity, as we have seen, were ambiguous. Not only in his first nationalist work, *The Last Moments of Shah Jahan*, but throughout his life, Abanindranath drew upon Muslim classics for inspiration, notably the Omar Khayy'am series and the Arabian Nights. He used to joke with his pupils that only he, a Pirali Brahmin, could properly imagine Mughal culture. The Pirali (Pir-Ali) Tagores were stigmatised by the orthodox for taking employment under Muslims. On the other hand, Chughtai was open-minded enough not to exclude Hindu themes. He also praised Ajanta as part of common Indian heritage.[183]

Yet it would be wrong to dismiss Chughtai's self-perception as a Muslim in this period of nationalist revivals. During the resurgence of Islam in India, one of its greatest exponents, the poet Muhammad Iqbal, had started writing in Persian in a Pan-Islamic spirit. Chughtai, who was inspired by Pan-Islam, turned to what he considered his heritage, namely Mughal art and its precursor, Persian art. His works show a meticulous

rendering of Islamic architectural details, while his gifted draughtsmanship recalls Islamic calligraphy (Fig. 175). He adopted the coloured line of Persian masters, particularly of Riza i-Abbasi, whom he looked up to as a forerunner. Of course, he was not simply a follower of Riza any more than Abanindranath was traditional. Chughtai belonged to the colonial cross-fertilisation of cultures: as Beardsley and the Decadents drew upon Eastern art, including the work of the Japanese artist, Ogata Korin, so



174 Abdur Rahman Chughtai: *Jahanara and the Taj*, watercolour (compare Abanindranath's Fig. 147)

Chughtai selected for reinterpretation the eastern elements of *art nouveau*. However, it was the *fin-de-siècle* languor that perfectly matched his nostalgia. Cousins traced Chughtai's inspiration to an Iranian dream world. Yet he also perceptively suggested that Chughtai's 'Orientalism' would be the most obvious aspect to a westerner.[184]

175 Abdur Rahman Chughtai: *Dancing Stars*, pen drawing

Chughtai sought to distance his 'wash' technique, with sinuous lines heightened by delicate roseate colours, from that of the Bengal School. 'When I began my career', he wrote late in life,

> the new Indian art was known as the Bengal School. It had taken over the subcontinent and was patronised by the Raj. Praises of the Tagores were not confined to India and there was no room for other artists. Divorced from life, the Bengal School was full of pessimism and gloom. My natural bent as well as my artistic style and subject-matter were completely opposed to this school.

Chughtai's discovery of a pure Muslim expression took time, for when he began his career, romantic genre scenes inspired by Punjab women cluttered his imagination. He relates one such obsession: 'a woman going down to the river to fill her pots with water; the sudden jerk of her heart made her pots slip away accidentally'. The painter, who felt that these works did not do justice to his artistic aims, reflected on his credo:

> I have created Sheherazade, Badr'ul Badr, Aladin, Sindbad, Harun al-Rashid . . . and have given form to Sa'di, Omar Khayy'am and Hafiz, all those who upheld the past grandeur of Islam . . . If the artist or poet does not take active part in politics, he should at least be active in national life. Art is our national heritage but convincing art cannot come from imitating European forms, nor is the belief in western progress conducive to national well-being. Bihzad and Riza, who did not depend on Leonardo or Raphael for their achievements, would have approved of my work. An artist can only be universal by being rooted in his own culture.[185]

Chughtai preferred Islamic classics, especially poems of Rumi, Omar Khayy'am, Sa'di, and Mirza Ghalib. Iqbal, who inspired Chughtai, introduced his *Muraqqa i-Chughtai*, where he wrote ruefully: 'With the exception of architecture, the art of Islam [music, painting and poetry] is yet to be born – the art that aims at the human assimilation of divine attributes'. An ambitious collaboration between the poet and the painter was mooted. Wishing to be considered alongside Dante and Goethe, Iqbal engaged Chughtai to illuminate the English translation of his poems. The project remained incomplete because of the poet's death. Among Chughtai's illustrations to Iqbal, two stand out: the first shows a woman visiting a shrine at dead of night with a lamp which throws an eerie light on her; the second on the transient nature of fame imagines the darkness under the lamp as a semi-nude woman. She balances a light on her head, while her arms and breasts, treated skilfully by Chughtai, attract the viewer's attention; both blended languid eroticism with mystery that was quintessential Chughtai (Fig. XXVII). Chughtai's voluptuous women personify his world of 'degeneration' framed in history. Significantly, Chughtai did not exclude Hindu themes if he found in them the delicate eroticism he specialised in (Fig. 176). Ultimately, it was not nationalist rhetoric but his personal vision that singled him out as an imaginative artist.[186]

176 Abdur Rahman Chughtai: *Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa*, watercolour. In the early period Chughtai did not hesitate to treat Hindu themes

9 WESTERNISERS AND ORIENTALISTS: PUBLIC BATTLE OF STYLES

The Bengal School relied on an inner strength to make its way through hostile, unfair and narrow-minded criticisms. But it overcame all opposition, establishing itself on the secure foundations of eternal Indian art. O. C. Gangoly *Bhārater Shilpa o Āmār Kathā*, 1969

When an art loses vitality, it often gives rise to a new movement that reacts strongly against earlier precepts. However, when that new art makes exaggeration a precondition of success, it faces a crisis of ideals . . . Sukumar Ray in 'Exaggeration in Art', 1916

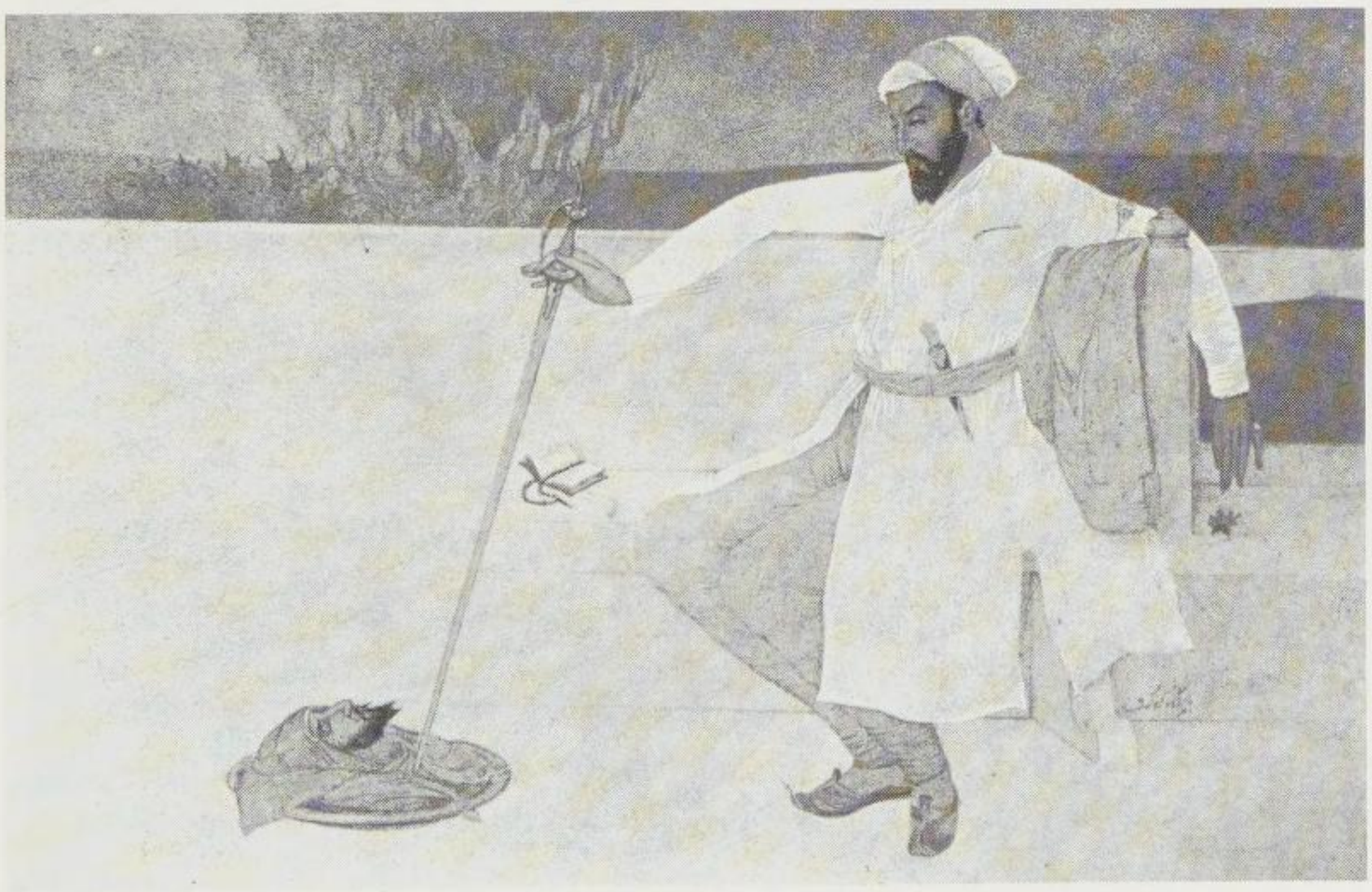
THE ICONOGRAPHY OF ORIENTAL ART

Even though Abanindranath did not impose his own style on his students, almost all of them, above all Asit Haldar and Kshitindranath Majumdar, emulated his wash technique. The Bengal School impressed Cousins as a coherent movement; he wrote: 'In a short time I became aware that I was seeing not merely an exhibition of paintings by a number of artists whose personal distinctiveness was held together by a temperamental and technical unity, but was witnessing . . . the reawakening of a gifted nation . . .'.[1] The Bengal School consciously sought to merge individual differences: linear perspective was modified in favour of Mughal aerial perspective, or the far-eastern atmospheric one, but never abandoned; colours, bound by far-eastern conventions, were muted, Nandalal and Venkatappa being notable exceptions. The south Indian conjured up a strange, almost surreal landscape of glowing colours, as seen first in *Śiva Rātri*. Nandalal's powerful, often harsh, lines and his 'hot' colours were more Ajanta than *mototai*. On the whole, the movement gave up chiaroscuro in favour of a flat treatment, defined by strong outlines. Venkatappa and Iswari Prasad were entrusted with developing indigenous paints in 1909–10. The miniature format, a hallmark of medieval Indian painting, chosen by Abanindranath, however, hardly fulfilled Havell's *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal (if we exclude *Aurangzeb Examining the*

Head of Dara (Fig. 177)). Again Nandalal's ambitious frescoes at Santiniketan were the exception. But in more subtle ways, academic art was abandoned. At Abanindranath's school, Cousins came upon 'a lad lying flat on the floor painting a design'.[2] Giving up easels and donkeys had a more profound effect than was realised then.

Oriental art can be reduced to basic types, historicist and Victorian anecdotal; we consider here the first, vital for national regeneration, for embellishing Nivedita's temples to the nation. No 'mythic scenes should be allowed', she admonished, but only key historical episodes such as Ásoka's missions, Kaṇiṣka in council, Vikramāditya performing *aś-vamedha*, the coronation of Akbar and the building of the Taj Mahal. Only on an idealised past, expatiated Coomaraswamy, could 'ideal futures . . . be built . . . only heroic subjects, subjects that are impersonal, devoid of topical interest, and at the same time universal in their content, [are] the warp and woof of the web of cosmic consciousness [and] the true basis of a national or universal art'.[3]

Abanindranath's *Final Moments of Shah Jahan* conducted the most self-conscious 'archaeology' of the past, displaying an eye for detail which he never surpassed. His later *Shah Jahan Dreaming of the Taj* contained few incidental details to conjure up Mughal grandeur. In *Aurangzeb Examining the Head of Dara*, the focus shifts to psychology. The master also treated Buddhist episodes. These and the literary paintings from the *Kṛṣṇa Līlā* to the *Rubayy'at* consciously emulated miniature conventions. Among them the most notable are two versions of *The Music Party*, inspired by a work at the Calcutta Art Gallery. The version in *Kokka*, of a seated group framed by a semi-circular arch, combines the Indian miniature format with pale atmospheric colours.[4]



177 Abanindranath Tagore: *Aurangzeb Examining the Head of Dara*, large watercolour

The most memorable examples of oriental art were historicist, not only glorifying the past, but also enveloping it in noble sentiment and deep pathos. History lessons were offered in a nostalgic recreation of an age replaced by colonialism. The orientalists often compared themselves with the Pre-Raphaelites, a comparison not totally unfounded. However, unlike them, the Pre-Raphaelites generally used glittering hues, enhanced with a white base, the most striking examples of which are Millais's *Ophelia* and Holman Hunt's *Lady of Shalott*.[5] But what the two historicist movements shared was an obsession with the past and with stylistic revival. The orientalists created their own nostalgic vision with a blend of *morotai* and Millet: a single figure against a hazy background, with the distant horizon bathed in a mellow orange twilight. The vehicles of such noble themes were dignified, suffering figures, their stooping emaciated forms exuding an aura of acute spirituality. In Asit Haldar, Samarendra Gupta, Sailen Dey and Kshitindranath Majumdar the melancholia of orientalism was most pronounced. With them, as with Chughtai, 'pathos' and 'nostalgia' became an artistic conceit.

The classic image of an oppressive sense of loss and longing is Asit Haldar's image of a bent old man lost in thought, weighed down by *His Heritage* (Fig. 178), a personification of history and a symbol of the sick state of the once great Bengali nation. No work captured better the nationalist self-laceration, which lamented the decline of the race under a foreign yoke. European *fin-de-siècle* works, with their mood of disease and degeneration, offered the Bengal School ideal ingredients for a mythology of the defeated. Haldar gave pictorial form to Nivedita's notion of the soul heavy with longing for the lost culture, confirming her belief that only the defeated were capable of great art. Mme Hollebecque was struck by the 'harmonious civilisation congregating in a melancholy fashion around ancient cults and legends.[6]

The other work that reeked of melancholy, infirmity and decay was Suren Ganguly's *Flight of Lakshman Sen* (Fig. 179), inspired by a historical anecdote: as the Muslim invader Bakhtiyar Khilji overran Bengal, its aging Hindu ruler fled with his family instead of putting up a fight. Whatever the truth of the story, its suggestion of feebleness offered Suren an opportunity to visualise the national *angst*. Havell described the work as follows:

> The decrepit figure of the monarch is seen crawling down his palace stairs, at the foot of which a barge is waiting to aid him in his escape.[7]

The fugitive king is bent double with age, a painting unsparing in its portrayal of a historical catastrophe. The implied cowardice of Lakshman Sen deeply offended Bengali nationalists.

Sumptuous albums published by ISOA on Asit Haldar with James Cousins's introduction, and on Kshitin Majumdar with O. C. Gangoly's, bring out the main themes of oriental art. Asit expanded Abanindranath's

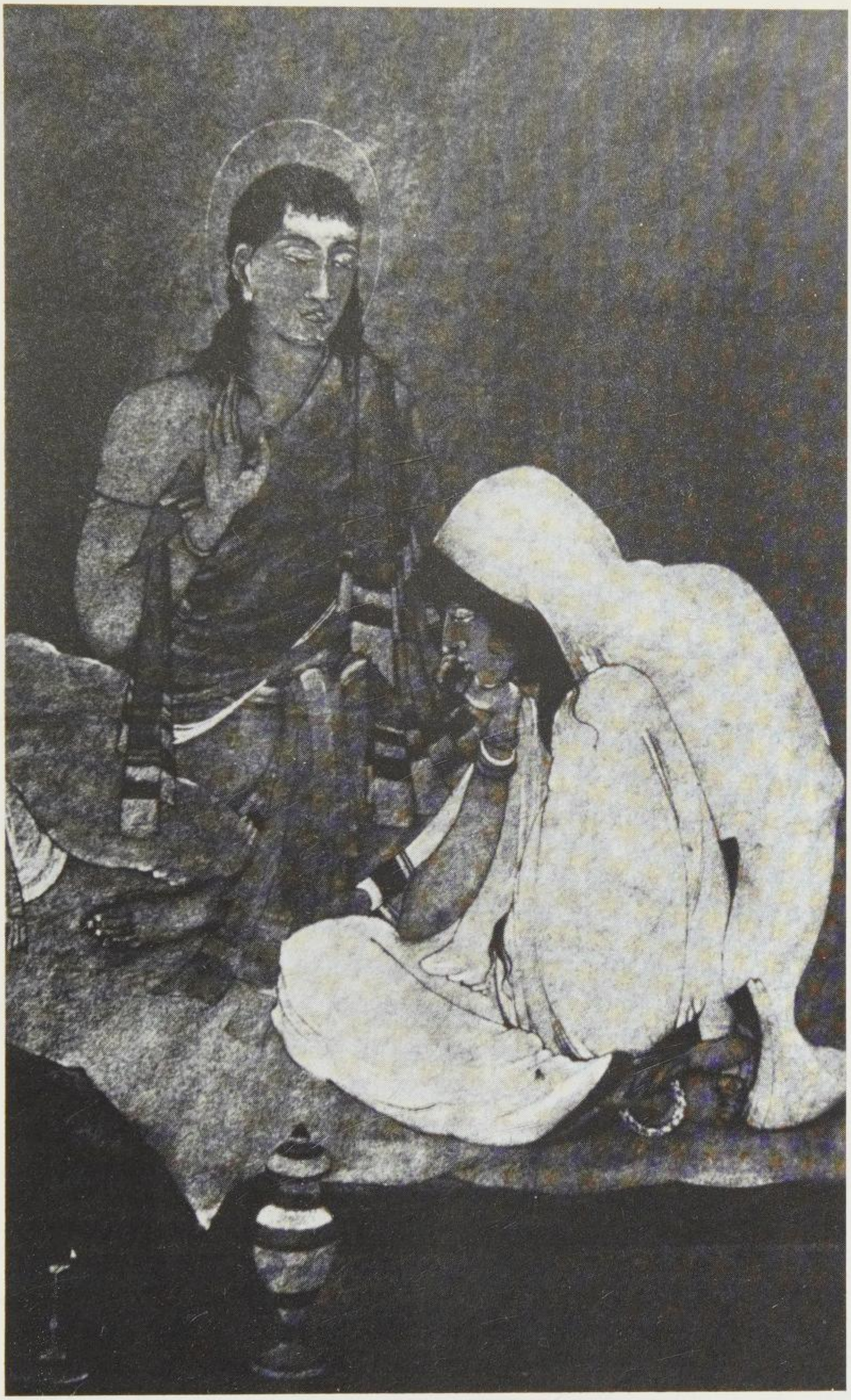
atmospheric lyricism, while Vaisnava stories suited Kshitin's personal faith. The scenes chosen from the life of the Vaisnava saint Chaitanya were the ones that expressed sadness and resignation (Fig. 180). The two painters also painted works redolent of Victorian sentimentalism with such titles as: *The End of the Artist's Illusion*, *The Unknown Voyage*, *The Precious Gift*, *The Flame of Music* and *The Spirit of the Storm*. Overloaded with literary symbolism, they exuded gloom and joylessness. Yet there is

178 Asit Haldar: *His Heritage*, watercolour

no denying the persuasive power of these sombre works in their time.[8]

With the Bengal School's interest in literature, book illustration played an essential part in their oeuvre. The illustrations to *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* (left unpublished at Nivedita's death and brought out by Coomaraswamy in 1913) afford us a view of the mature phase of the Bengal School. An atypical painting of the series is Nandalal's drawing of the mythical bird, Garuda, set against a bright orange background (Fig. 181).

179 Suren Ganguly: *The Flight of Lakshman Sen*, watercolour

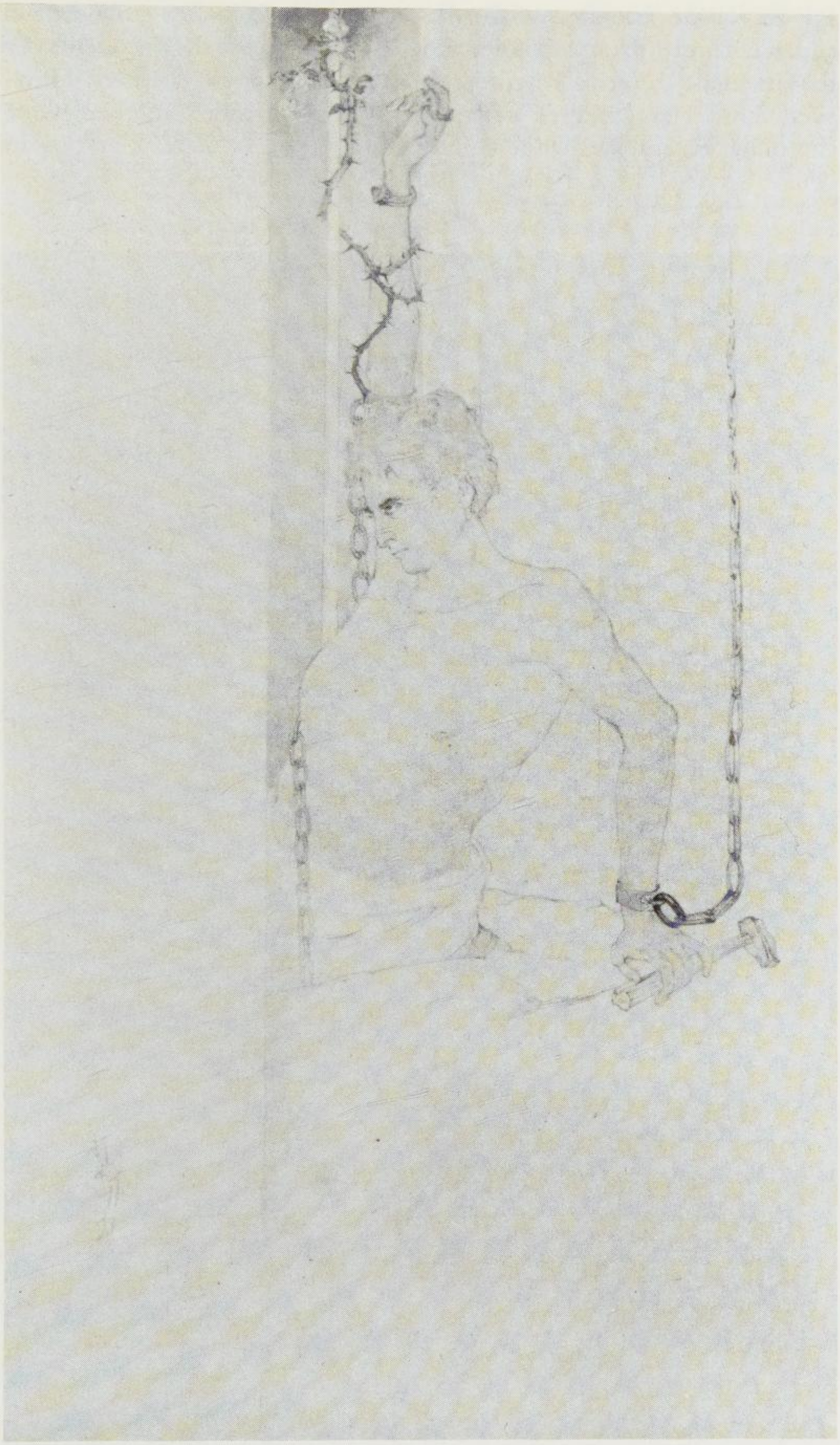


180 Kshitin Majumdar: *Chaitanya*, watercolour

Another one shows his debt to Ajanta, although he had not yet abandoned delicate watercolours. Venkatappa's use of flat pure colours for the *Rāmāyaṇa* recalls his artisan background. Abaniṇdranath's other illustrations include Rabindranath's *Gitānjali* (Fig. 182) and Scott Conner's *Charm of Kashmir* (Fig. 183).[9]

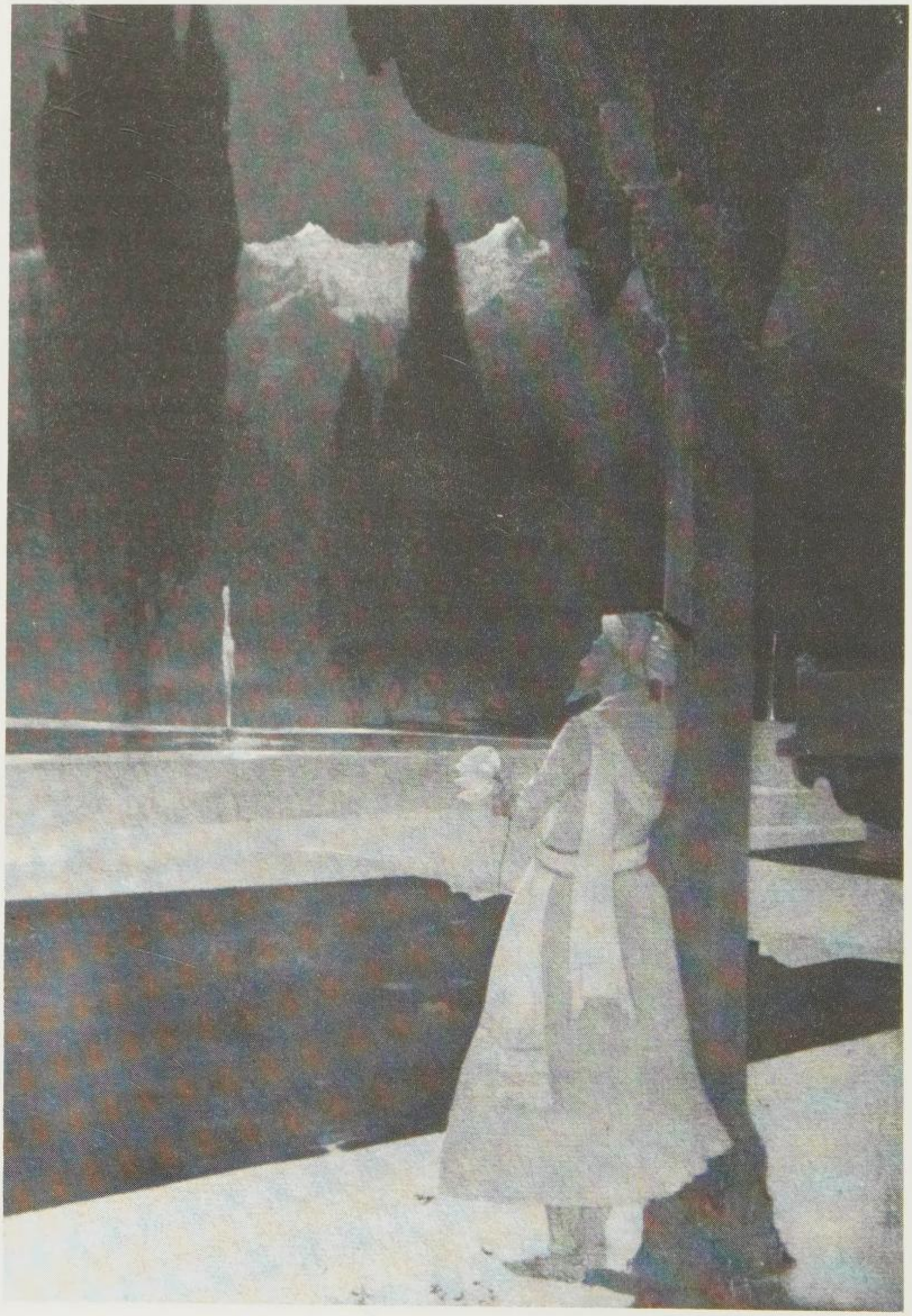
But it was the orientalist treatment of the human form that shocked the public, used to the Victorian naturalism of Varma. Yet Abanindranath's feminine ideal was that of late Romantic art. The elongated three-quarter faces and strong jaws of the *Siddhas of the Upper Air* remind us of

181 Nandalal Bose: *Garuḍa*, watercolour



182 Abanindranath Tagore: *Prisoners tell me, who was it that bound you?*, from Rabindranath's *Gitānjali and Fruitgathering* (1918), watercolour

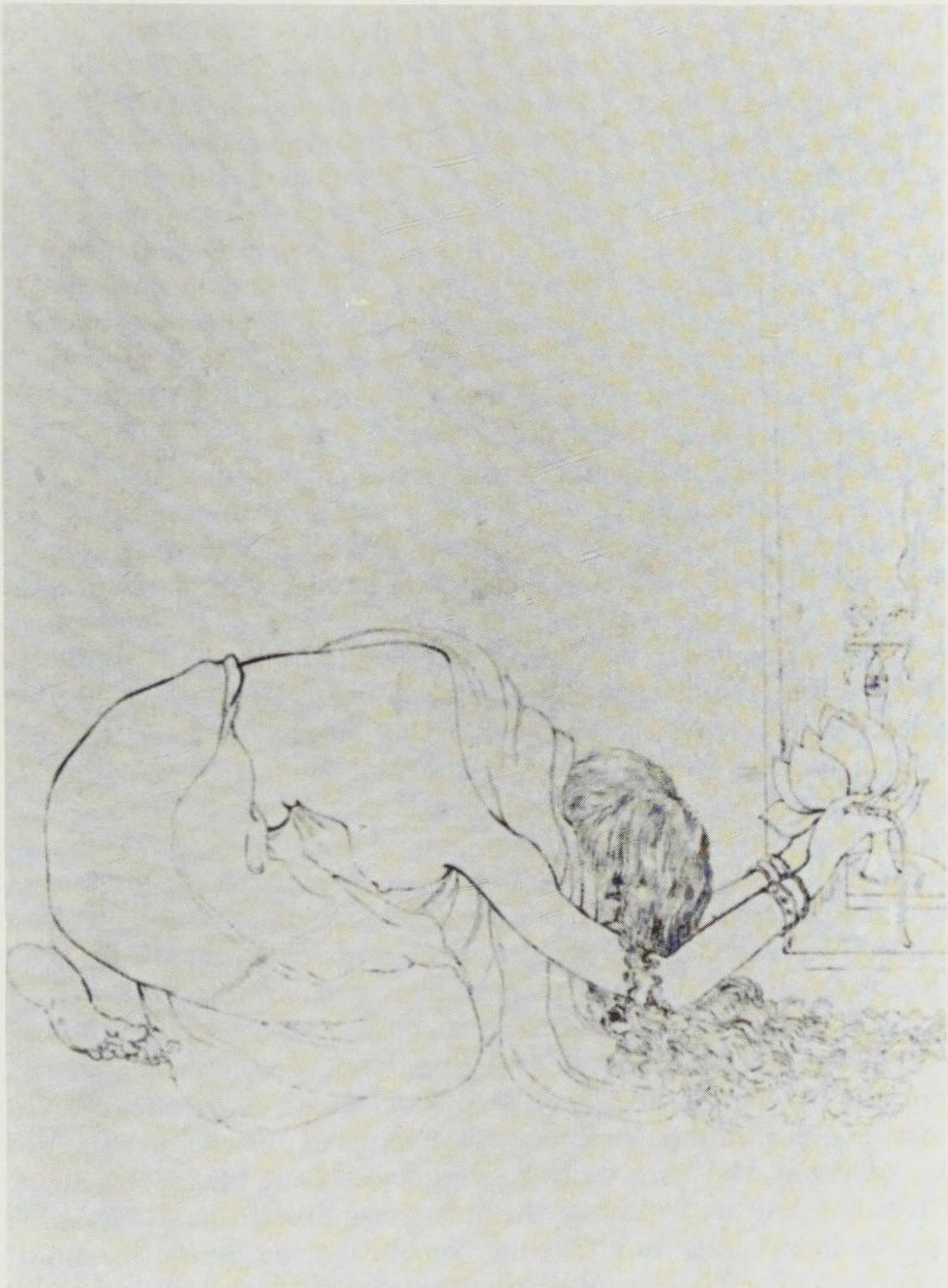
Pre-Raphaelite beauties, while the emaciated spirituality embodied in elongated limbs, drooping heads and bleary eyes recalls the Decadents. To the orientalists, Varma's figures were too outrageously healthy. However, amid a plethora of anaemic figures in oriental art, there were charming exceptions, while some painters tried to steer a precarious course between art and kitsch (Figs XXVIII, XXIX, XXX).[10]



183 Abanindranath Tagore: from Scott O'Connor's *Charm of Kashmir*, watercolour

O. C. Gangoly, the idéologue of the group, chose Abanindranath's *Yakṣa's Lament* to explicate the orientalist canon:

> Abanindranath did not invent the theme but merely translated into art Kalidasa's conception of the Yakṣa as a superhuman being. Today gods and *Purāṇic* heroes are treated as human beings; yet to do justice to our mental image of them we needed to create ideal types. It was this ideal that the public found most difficult to accept. But the question is: is there only one way of imagining mythological figures?[11]



184 Asit Haldar: *The Worshipper*, pen drawing

ORIENTAL ART AND THE CHALLENGE TO UNIVERSAL RULES OF TASTE

Taste and the art plate

By 1915, oriental art had emerged as the dominant vision in Bengal, a success that cannot be explained solely by the activities of the ISOA. Although art societies were active in Bombay, there were no debates on art in the city; it was a profession conducted with impersonal efficiency. But in Calcutta, art came to hold the centre stage in cultural politics. Annotated art plates in magazines, to paraphrase Clausewitz, helped conduct the 'war' by other means. They were the propaganda weapons in the orientalist invasion, as acknowledged by Abanindranath: 'our pictures are in every household today because of Ramananda Babu [Chatterjee]. The Indian Society of Oriental Art had failed to popularise oriental art but by his perseverance and by financial investments in superior colour and half-tone prints, he had created a demand where none existed before'.[12] From 1912, 'Chatterjee's Picture Albums' familiarised the Bengal School throughout India, although privately dismissed by Havell as 'Chatterjee's trash'.[13]

Since *Prabāsi* and *Modern Review* were so central to the visual education of the nation, Chatterjee's own taste speaks volumes about changing Indian taste. His initial sensibility as a cultivated Bengali was Victorian, and even with the advent of oriental art a modified naturalism provided the baseline. Victorian paintings greet us at regular intervals in *Prabāsi*; hence it is all the more fascinating to watch Chatterjee's evolution from an admirer of naturalism to a champion of oriental art.

In the last century, in Bengal as in the rest of India, art appreciation was predicated on a universal language of art. Great art appealed to all cultivated people, irrespective of cultural differences. Hence one only had to be conversant with its language. There was no recognition of the fact that these 'universal' rules belonged to a specific culture: European. This faith in absolute values led Chatterjee to print masterpieces of European art in *Prābasi*. Today, it may seem a travesty that Raphaels, Murillos and Guido Renis jostled with the *artistes pompiers*, Bisson and Hoffman, Godward and Leslie. But we must remember that Victorians regarded these artists as the triumphant culmination of Renaissance art.[14]

Prabāsi wished to combat cultural parochialism. When Chatterjee faced protests from diehard nationalists, he riposted that great art recognised no frontiers. Such art enabled Indians to develop universal sympathies. In 1903 he explained the appearance of Raphael's *St Catherine* in *Prabāsi* to answer critics who insisted that Indian subjects were more appropriate. Defending his own record of championing Indian artists, Ramananda posed a rhetorical question: 'Should we praise Indian art simply because it is Indian?' After all, even the foreign Raj cherished Indian antiquities as

part of a common human heritage. A devout Hindu may prefer a Kalighat *pat* or a Bengali almanac sketch to a Raphael. But this only exposed his ignorance.[15]

Other journals, including *Bhārati*, reproduced European art. In 1905, Biharilal Goswami analysed the scientific aspects of representation, while in 1909 Indu Bhusan Mallik described his visit to the art gallery in Marseilles.[16] Between 1910–13, *Sāhitya* packed its pages with European painters with brief annotations. Famous works such as the *Apollo Belvedere* or masters such as Raphael, Titian, Murillo, Greuze, Reynolds and Rodin rubbed shoulders with lesser artists, Albert Moore, Bouguereau, Rossetti, Dulac, Millais, Landseer, Etty, Lord Leighton and Sargent. But J. D. Leslie, Godward, Ryland, Richter, Wontnor, Herbert Draper, John Philip, Lady Stanley, Kennington, Valentine Prinsep, Rondel, Tarrant and Thomas Duncan also enjoyed favour with *Sāhitya*, a taste shared with its rival *Prabāsi*. It is hard to discern any clear motive behind *Sāhitya*'s choice other than a weakness for comprehensible, morally uplifting, sentimental narratives.[17]

The change of taste in *Prabāsi* coincided with the rise of O. C. Gangoly as art critic. Thoroughly Ruskinian, Gangoly cultivated the English critic's lofty disdain. However, art as an exalted mission went back to Winckelmann. In Gangoly's maiden article, 'Philosophy in Art' (1904), the choice of G. F. Watts reflected his Victorian upbringing. Art was despised by the virtuous in Bengal, wrote Gangoly, because it offered little more than sensual gratification. Yet its value depended on the use to which it was put. Gangoly ascribed an ethical, social and, above all, an exalted national purpose to art: a teacher and not a mere creator of beautiful objects. A true artist was a saviour who rescued society from degeneracy. Gangoly's saviour was Watts the allegorical artist, a recluse venerated in Britain as St George. His works delved into the inner spirit; their appeal transcended national parochialism, the last remark prompted by Watts' apparent ambition to reach people of all faiths.[18]

By the time Gangoly came to Godward's *Farewell* in 1905, he had fallen out of love with academic art. This lesser olympian had touched Bengali hearts. Dismissing Godward as a minor painter, Gangoly dissected the achievements of the olympians, Alma-Tadema, Leighton and Poynter, and their ultimate inspiration, Jacques-Louis David. The Frenchman's blind passion for the Classical world was compared to the mimicry of English manners by colonial Indians. The re-creations of the past by Alma-Tadema, albeit convincing, were marred by an atmosphere of lassitude. His realism was entertaining rather than uplifting. What *Prabāsi* reflects here is the entry of pictorial evangelism in the Bengali milieu, evident in Gangoly's articles and in Nivedita's choice of artists, especially Millet. Artistic evangelism was enshrined as the first principle of oriental art, making it a missionary vocation of the utmost seriousness. Interestingly, among Renaissance artists only Raphael was spared, which

suggests that the Madonna, the finest expression of idealism for Nivedita, was identified with him.[19] If artistic evangelism tended to be humourless, in practice it was not developed systematically; the antidote to Gangoly's hectoring was Abanindranath's playfulness.

Turning towards Indian art

As colour plates became a regular feature in *Prabāsi* between 1903–7, the stage was set for the reception of oriental art. The bhadralok, however, first read about Abanindranath in *The Studio* (1903). In 1903, quoting Havell, *Prabāsi* remarked that while Abanindranath was inspired by Mughal art, he was an individualist rather than a revivalist, regretting that the monochrome reproductions did not do justice to his subtle range of colours. Abanindranath's *Abhisār* appeared in *Prabāsi* in 1907. The face, posture, dress and ornament of the heroine were Indian, claimed the critic, once again appealing to Havell. Ramananda's own catholicity, however, prevented him from dropping the academic artists Dhurandhar and Ravi Varma altogether. Nor were Victorian painters shunned.[20]

Two articles on Ajanta in *Prabāsi* marked the turning point in bhadralok perception of their heritage but also exposed its unevenness. Balendranath had not shown interest in Ajanta but *swadeshi* nationalists did. The first piece on Ajanta in the inaugural issue (1901) was based not on Chatterjee's personal experience but on Griffiths. Oriental art was still in its infancy then. If Ramananda wished to demonstrate artistic progress in India, his success was limited. Viewing the cave paintings within the Victorian framework, he admitted that while Ajanta was not on a par with European art, it compared favourably with other early achievements. 'Elongated eyes, heavy bosom and hips', he conceded, 'are praised in our literature but one must not transgress nature. In Ajanta women's breasts and hips are unnaturally exaggerated, though other parts of human anatomy are treated with unusual skill . . . But these ancient artists cannot draw the feet properly.'[21] Ramananda went into details of the prevailing fashion at Ajanta. Some women wore a bodice-like jacket, but this should not be confused with the modern English 'bodice', he observed with his female readers in mind.

When O. C. Gangoly's article appeared in 1907, orientalists were in a belligerent mood. The year before, in his article, 'National Art versus Foreign Art', he had blamed the decline of indigenous art on the 'foreign' art schools, exhorting artists to follow Japan which did not copy the West slavishly. His opening shots in 'Two Days in Ajanta', based on his stay there, reflected this mood: 'Our curse is that we are indifferent to our own heritage unless Europeans draw our attention to it'. His own curiosity, he admitted, was aroused by Griffiths, acknowledging the debt to European scholars in restoring national pride. They regarded Ajanta as one of the

finest monuments, he added as if to convince his readers. Yet colonial rule made Indians forget their own heritage. Gangoly continued:

> No doubt we feel proud that the art of Ajanta is in no way inferior to that of Greece. But Ajanta is not only significant for its past, it is invaluable as a future ideal. Ajanta could help us to create superior art . . . Indian art can only be nourished by Mother India's milk, not cow's milk supplied by the milkmaid, be it rich and 'creamy'. As with religion and literature, art cannot be built upon the foundations of an alien ideal.[22]

For two thousand years Hindu art had remained mute, lacklustre, and filthy, he went on relentlessly. Ajanta was to be the sacred tool for removing the pollution of foreign ideas. As an orthodox Brahmin, his employment of the word *jāti-nashta* (loss of caste through pollution), to explain western dominance, had a special resonance. Once besotted with European art, he now turned on it with ferocity.[23] Yet for all his vehemence, Gangoly tamely accepted that Ajanta neither reached the heights of Victorian art nor did it progress. Since Ajanta's inner spirit was often lost in its technical deficiency, it had to be judged by decorative rather than representational standards. Do we not hear echoes of Birdwood here?

Gangoly's main point was: 'Indian subjects did not by themselves make Indian art'. However moving Arnold's biography of the Buddha, it did not qualify as national literature; it simply failed the litmus test of authenticity. An obsession with the unique cultural psychology of India was to remain with him. In 1914, arguing that Japanese influence on the Bengal School was exaggerated, he insisted that it was 'preferable to borrow from the art-forms of the nation's past than to copy models from foreign countries'. However, Asian influence was less injurious than the domination of Greek art, which was 'detrimental to the genius of India'.[24] Such vehemence affected impressionable artists. A concern for 'Indianness' informs for instance Asit Haldar's claim in 1916 that ancient Hindus enjoyed a monopoly of spirituality in India. The skills of the Mughals were meretricious, while Buddhist art was spiritual, a contention that debarred Mughal paintings from the national heritage.[25]

The art that was not indigenous in *bhāva* (sentiment), manner and style could not appeal to the Indian mind, wrote Gangoly; his *bhāva* was a dose of Victorian sentimentalism, a dash of Ruskin and a soupçon of pictorial evangelism. In fact, the key to this passage is not *bhāva*, but 'indigenous manner', a concept that underscored the 'non-illusionist' character of Indian art, a central plank in the *swadeshi* doctrine. The clue to Gangoly's thinking is in his essay on Abanindranath, 'National Art' (1906). Although he reserved his judgement on the artist as a path-breaker whose vision could be developed by more talented people, the article holds our attention for another reason. This is the first serious analysis of Abanindranath's 'Indianness' as a 'decorative' painter. Each culture, Gangoly

wrote, filtered nature through its own viewpoint; imitation of nature was western in as much as 'idealism' was eastern. To him 'idealism' was the basis of decoration, a feature not only of Mughal portraits but also of Indian literature. For Indian literature too used ideal types rather than individuals, such as the heroes in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Even if one does not entirely agree with Gangoly's reading of this epic or finds his separation between naturalism and decoration somewhat artificial, for there is no reason why one cannot have naturalistic decoration, it contains an important truth.[26]

Gangoly was the first critic to pinpoint the essential difference between 'flat' and 'solid' representations of the visual world; between a decorative style based on the typical, and European naturalist art derived from individual life study. His clarification now offered nationalist artists clear guidelines: Abanindranath's aims of returning to this flat 'Indian style' made sense only in the light of the western definition of decoration. The eighteenth-century critic, Fréart de Chambray, was typical in his view that art was 'ornamental, so as to gratify the sensuous appetites of its patrons'.[27] Gangoly turned this western idea on its head by making decorative art morally superior. It became the rallying cry of orientalism and Abanindranath could hold that the 'accurate' portrayal of objects in the round, based on life study, was morally degrading.[28] In practice, however, orientalists never succeeded in evolving a strictly flat, linear style.

In 1903 *Bhārati* entered the arena of muscular nationalism with a detailed discussion of Havell's article with the pugnacious title, 'British Barbarism and Indian Art', and with Birdwood's attacks on government policy.[29] In 1906, the linguist Dinesh Sen berated his countrymen for their obsession with illusionism, exhorting students not to make a fetish of 'scientific' art and anatomical accuracy. Konarak may not display scientific anatomy but it proved that religion, and not mechanical exercises, was the inspirer of art. Western art had become distorted by losing its religious inspiration. Sen then turned fiercely on Indian painters who clothed Indian gods in a 'foreign garb' and depicted the Mother Goddess as a 'memsahib'. A stern warning was issued to Indian women who suppressed their maternal instincts in imitation of European women. The path of 'godless' western art must be avoided at all costs, even if one was forced to use Winsor and Newton paints.[30] Oriental art was increasingly portrayed as a *pūjā* (sacred ritual) whose purity must be protected from European naturalism. The same year, Hemendra Roy's articles expatiated on the superiority of Indian art to European; the latter copied reality, while the former took wing in imagination.[31]

Neither *Modern Review* nor *Prabāsi* succumbed to bigotry and stifled debate. Nor did they stop reproducing academic art. But there was the first hint of intolerance in Abanindranath's lecture, 'Shilpe Tridhārā' (The Three Streams of Art), given at the art school and translated by Sen for *Modern Review*. The times were heady. A pan-Asian 'spiritual' art was

around the corner. If Abanindranath expressed uncharacteristic rancour in his talk, the English translation poured pure venom. European academic art was evil with the exception of Raphael, 'whose work caught a glimpse of heaven'. The rest were the degenerate products of a faithless age, the imitation of which must stunt the growth of Indian artists. In any case, as Indians, they had no aptitude for absorbing an alien art.[32]

Alarmed by the erupting paranoia, Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri intervened in *Modern Review*. It was unworthy of Abanindranath to brand life class as pernicious, and academic art as evil. Upendrakishore's view that the Indian spirit was not inimical to naturalism reflected his sympathies with academic art. Early students could not absorb mimetic skills because they were artisans. Ignorant of European culture, they failed to appreciate its art. But Rohini Nag, Fanindra Bose, Sashi Hesh and above all Jamini Gangooly were the success stories of academic art. Reared on naturalism, Upendrakishore held a unilinear view of artistic evolution: 'the Indian artist employs the same language, artistically speaking, as the European, the former talking like a child, the latter like a man'. He too accepted that Indian art was less developed. Since high art was founded on nature, it followed that Indians were better at decoration, which however did not imply inherent disability. But he refused to say with orientalists that decorative art was more suited to Indian talents. Dismissing as mere rhetoric the notion that 'imitation of nature' was slavish, he pointed to the fine naturalistic works of Abanindranath. Finally, if the late miniatures in the Calcutta Art Gallery demonstrated Indian painters' attempts to master western art, what was wrong with learning it properly? Bengali literature had already proved that it was possible to respond to western Romanticism without losing one's personality.[33]

What his essay questioned was the growing cult of the irrational that blurred the boundaries between art and religion. To orientalists, gods were the only proper subjects for art; the western contagion was to be countered with the Bengali potter's humble clay images, 'viewed in a special setting [and accompanied by] priestly incantations'. Devotion, wrote Raychaudhuri, was no substitute for skill. 'Is Indian art, and the instruction provided at the school of art meant for devoted Hindus alone?' The question referred to Abanindranath's elevation of art to a sacred ritual.[34]

Gangoly, the high priest of oriental art, now decided to play the grand inquisitor. Upendrakishore's patriotism was brought into question. Gangoly's polemics can be read as an orthodox Hindu attack on the liberal Upendrakishore: he was no better than the *déraciné* who opposed Havell's sale of the European collection. A firm believer in racial psychology, Gangoly denied that Indians could ever capture the spirit of European art, even as they mimicked its grammar. As for Hesh and Gangooly, cultural hybrids, he had sheer contempt for them. Finally, in a superior moral

tone, Gangoly warned against the seductive charms of European art.[35]

In 1909 others questioned Abanindranath's concept of *bhāva* and his rejection of life drawing in favour of the 'inner eye'. Aban's 'eye of the soul', which belonged in a world beyond nature and criticism, prompted a heated debate on physical beauty in art. Taraprasanna Ghosh, in 'Where does beauty lie in Abanindranth's painting?' in *Prabāsi*, claimed that beauty in Abanindranath's painting originated in the inner recesses of the mind. Sensing that this enigmatic statement demanded elucidation, he offered it obliquely. The quality of poetry or painting relied on the *bhāva* (idea) expressed in it. However beautiful the body, it was useless without the life in it. Since idea was 'the very soul' of art, the higher the idea, the better the art; artistic skill was trivial without a transcendental idea. Ghosh's exaltation of content to the neglect of form owed to Romantic criticism which held that skill was misleading as an artistic criterion.[36]

But how did this apply to Abanindranath? At first glance it may seem that his *Captive Sītā* had taken poetic licence in placing her in a prison instead of a spacious garden. Secondly, this 'desiccated' Sita hardly displayed any drawing skill. But Ghosh invited his readers to enter the artist's inner world. To express Sita's sorrow, Abanindranath had chosen the metaphor of a prison. The tiny ray of light entering through the small window stood for the memory of her past happiness. His unique talent was to lay bare the psychological state of Sītā, an imaginative flight unlike that of an average person. Unable to gauge if his exegesis convinced his readers, Ghosh decided to disarm them with professions of *naïveté:* 'never before have we witnessed such an image of the chaste wife. Since my powers of explanation fail, all I can do is record what my simple mind tells me. His talent illuminates the temple to "the muse of Indian art" sadly neglected for centuries but far more precious than the grand temples to foreign muses'.[37]

Such special pleading moved Bimalangsu Roy to write to the editor in a mock-serious tone:

> Everyone will agree that the waves raised in the sea of Bengali culture by the new 'Indian art' are based almost entirely on a few reproductions and their elaborate explanations. Reluctantly we have accepted it but would be grateful for further clarification. One admits that *bhāva* is the soul of art and poetry, while external beauty is irrelevant. But surely distortion cannot be the *sine qua non* for expressing *bhāva*. Is it possible that these artists who spend so much effort on *bhāva* are incapable of treating external beauty? Perhaps these academic artists have lost their mimetic skill by cultivating Indian art? Young poets now indulge in ambiguity, fogginess, and meaningless expressions . . . But as Rabindranath states, loose thinking is fatal to poetry. One hopes that Indian artists have not taken that route?[38]

Chatterjee gave a terse reply: one must not make impossible demands on these artists. They never claimed that all their works were successful; nor

could one expect all their figures to be beautiful; not everyone was perfect in real life. Of the two approaches to beauty, photographic and metaphoric, the latter was a product of Indian idealism. Physical beauty that extolled sensuality was not the best artistic criterion. After all, medieval European paintings too, like Indian art, expressed a supra-sensual ideal.[39] Gangoly then intervened to settle the matter. In the past 'our ancestors left great works of art with very little regard for public approval', but now Bengali artists were forced to defend their works to the public. Their aim was to bring to life the supernal character of Sanskrit literature, a world far removed from ours. Since mimesis was not adequate for treating this world, the artists had turned to the mental picture offered by *dhyāna* (meditation). Their language was novel, not to say strange, but it pulsated with the spirit of ancient India where such things as 'external beauty' were irrelevant. Gangoly again adopted a superior tone: admittedly the subject was difficult, as was clear from the untutored responses in *Prabāsi*; but the 'whys' and 'wherefores' of art could not be comprehended with words but with actual experience. The Bengali critics' attacks on 'our Aryan art' were based solely on third-rate examples of Greek art. So long as they wore Greek 'blinkers', it was pointless to convince them of the worth of Indian art.[40]

Controversies raged throughout 1909 as orientalists kept up their defiant tone. During this high tide of cultural nationalism, Coomaraswamy's polemics became further grist to the *swadeshi* mill. Earlier, writing from England, he had nominated Abanindranath as the greatest living Indian artist, but regrettably far better known in the West. His paintings, unlike those of Ravi Varma, were 'the perfect expressions of Indian conceptions in a universal language . . . They have the mingled reticence and revelation that belong to all great art'.[41] After his European tutelage, Abanindranath, the leader of the Bengal School, realised

> the significance of Indian art traditions and set himself to . . . recover something of their spirit . . . [Though] his 'yaksha' shows traces of European and Japanese influence, [its] significance lies in . . . [its] essential Indianness. The delicate watercolours, [which] the Mugals delighted in, tender, reticent – that belong to all great art, but which demand something also of the public before they can be fully understood. These works expressed true nationalism in their revival of old tradition – especially the works of Nandalal and other pupils are remarkable for men so young.[42]

In 1909, Suren Ganguly's *Flight of Lakshman Sen* touched a raw nerve in Bengal. A leading historian, Akshoy Maitra, made his objection known in *Sāhitya*: 'it is ironic that the year it is proved that Lakshman Sen did not flee, the same year should have been chosen, not by any capricious individual, but by a body of men, advertising themselves under the name and style of "ISOA" to publish a painting of it'. Defending the artist, Coomaraswamy asserted that art was not archaeology and genius must

not be fettered by the dictates of historical accuracy; *ipso facto*, no archaeologist had the right to criticise an artist. *Modern Review* remarked that Maitra had not criticised the work but had merely questioned its historical accuracy.[43]

Nivedita sang a requiem to the end of the Hindu nation:

> Whatever we may think historically of the Flight of Lakshman Sen in 1203 . . . and I for one do not accept a word of the current nonsense that would make him a coward! – this picture . . . is magnificent, strong, nervous, full of energy and vigour. The escape of the discrowned king speaks in every line . . . It is a moment of withdrawal rather than flight. In some remote fastness of his kingdom, Lakshman Sen will still live and reign. When the hour strikes, he will return again.[44]

The intervention of Suresh Samajpati

In 1911, Aban's defence of Suren Ganguly in *Bangadarshan* unleashed a torrent from the editor of *Sāhitya*:

> Abanindranath claims that fact and fiction have equal status in art, for it draws beauty from even offensive subjects, as nectar is extracted from poison . . . The artist may be engrossed in the sublime task of revealing the obnoxious, but it may have escaped him that this one has to do with national honour. What is false has no value . . . Therefore the 'genius' who takes advantage of a national calumny to gather his 'nectar' must be shunned by decent people. Lakshman Sen's flight may be music to Muslim ears, but it is poison to us. Of course, it may also taste sweet to these 'artist-ants', who are thrilled by the compliments of their British friends . . . such a shameless exploitation of national dishonour by hybrids stinks and must not be inflicted upon the public. Poor Bengal! Poor Bengalis![45]

Sāhitya's tirade was not unexpected; once orientalists took on the public for their lack of enthusiasm for the new art, they naturally faced hostility. Feeling threatened by the assault on academic art, the westernisers of Bengal led by the influential literary journal, *Sāhitya*, hit back. Its astringent editor Suresh Samajpati, a nationalist and grandson of Vidyasagar, was known to bear a grudge against the Tagores, especially Rabindranath. He now launched a vitriolic assault on their circle. Samajpati enjoyed orientalist-baiting, tearing to shreds the ponderous exegeses of their works. He saw through their claims to cultural authenticity as a self-conscious product of colonialism. The whole exercise in *Sāhitya* turned into an elaborate language game of ironic exaggerations and malicious innuendoes, loved by Bengalis. We can imagine readers waiting impatiently for each issue of the paper. The genre brilliantly exploited by Samajpati belonged to the self-conscious world that gave us social cartoons. His attacks not only remind us of the ritual

quarrels of traditional Bengal but, more importantly, of the factionalism in bhadralok politics of the colonial period.[46]

A few of Samajpati's diatribes against oriental art are offered here to give a flavour of his ferocious wit. The orientalists themselves provided the pretext with their defensive self-righteousness. And who better than Nivedita to take a high moral stand? In 1908 she eulogised Abanindranath's *Captive Sītā* in *Modern Review*:

> The outstanding impression made by this picture is one of extraordinary mental intensity. The face is not perhaps chosen from amongst the most beautiful Indian types . . . [but the artist is] to be congratulated on the strength of his portrayal . . . the ideal lives for us at last. The Indian Madonna has found a form. In ages to come, each great painter may create his own particular presentment of Sita . . . But at least nothing can ever again be accepted, which is not psychologically Sita. In . . . this Sita, by Mr. Tagore, we have achieved something too deeply satisfying for us . . .[47]

In 1908, Abanindranath was launched in *Bhārati* with hyperbole, while traditional culture was extolled to the detriment of the colonial. Indu Bhusan Mallik, covering the ISOA exhibition of 1910, asserted that the difference between western and eastern art lay in the latter's emotional richness and serene quality.[48] Hironmoy Roychaudhuri, a sculpture student of Havell in 1905, left for London in 1910 to study at the Royal College of Art. While there, he wrote complaining to Asit Haldar that 'English flowers have no scent as English art concerns physical beauty alone and is too literal'.[49] This letter made a triumphant appearance in *Bhārati*.

In 1909, Dinesh Sen wrote indignantly in *Bhārati* about public indifference to Abanindranath's *Buddha and Sujātā* (Fig. 185):

> Our environment is filled with things indigenous, yet when we draw, we go for an alien ideal. An argument arose among my friends about *Buddha and Sujātā*. One objected to Buddha's elongated ears, tapering fingers, and other anatomical 'defects'. But another said, why don't you look carefully and judge whether the picture succeeds in capturing the great leader's serenity, Sujātā's pleasing modesty and devotion; if these are ably treated, then does it matter if the anatomy is correct or not? Anatomy is easily learned, but it is not easy to express a noble idea. The artist has given more thought to Sujātā's devotion than to anatomy. And even an artist must not interfere with the sacredness of the temple.[50]

Once again, this defensiveness that elevated art to the level of mysticism made orientalists vulnerable to ridicule.

Sāhitya at once went for the jugular; selecting Dinesh Sen as its first victim, it parodied his review and the painting:

> the way in which Sujātā's arms stretched out towards the Buddha, she should be able to reach him even if he dangled from the branch of a tree. Her two 'sticklike' arms should have no difficulty in plucking the sun and

> the moon out of the distant firmament, so elongated were they. If demolition of naturalism was the sole aim of 'ancient Indian art', then we had nothing to add. But the 'orient' here was a pretext, for any picture that flouted anatomy qualified for Abani Babu's gallery.[51]

The passage amused the readers, for they recognised Sujātā's unnaturally long arms as referring to the arms of the hideous female vampires of

185 Abanindranath Tagore: *Buddha and Sujātā*, watercolour

Bengali folktales. These creatures used their arms to hook male victims.

Kacha o Devajānī, Abanindranath's 'cartoon' for a fresco published in *Bhārati* in 1909, was inspired by Rabindranath's play. The reviewer Charuchandra Bandopadhaya gushed: 'whoever had read Rabi Babu's "Bidai Abhisāp" would be charmed by this picture. It is one of Abanindra Babu's best. The perspective is so beautifully rendered with a few rocks and plants'.[52] In 1911, *Prabāsi* repeated the praise. Samajpati responded:

> Charu Babu writes that whoever has read Robi Babu's 'Bidai Abhisāp' will be charmed by the picture. We have read it countless times and have even been charmed by it, but we fail to find anything charming about the painting. Perhaps we are rustics, incapable of appreciating its subtle charms. But the mental image we have of the story bears no resemblance to the picture. The painter has gone beyond nature. We cannot grasp why in so-called Indian paintings, the arms, legs, and especially the fingers, need to be so unnaturally and cloyingly tapered.[53]

In 1908 Abanindranath's *Gaṇeśa's Mother* (Fig. 186) was presented as a modern interpretation of Hindu iconography. In 1910, *Prabāsi* called it a *jeu d'esprit*, the plump little elephant-god picking fruits for his mother with his cute little trunk. *Sāhitya* rejoined:

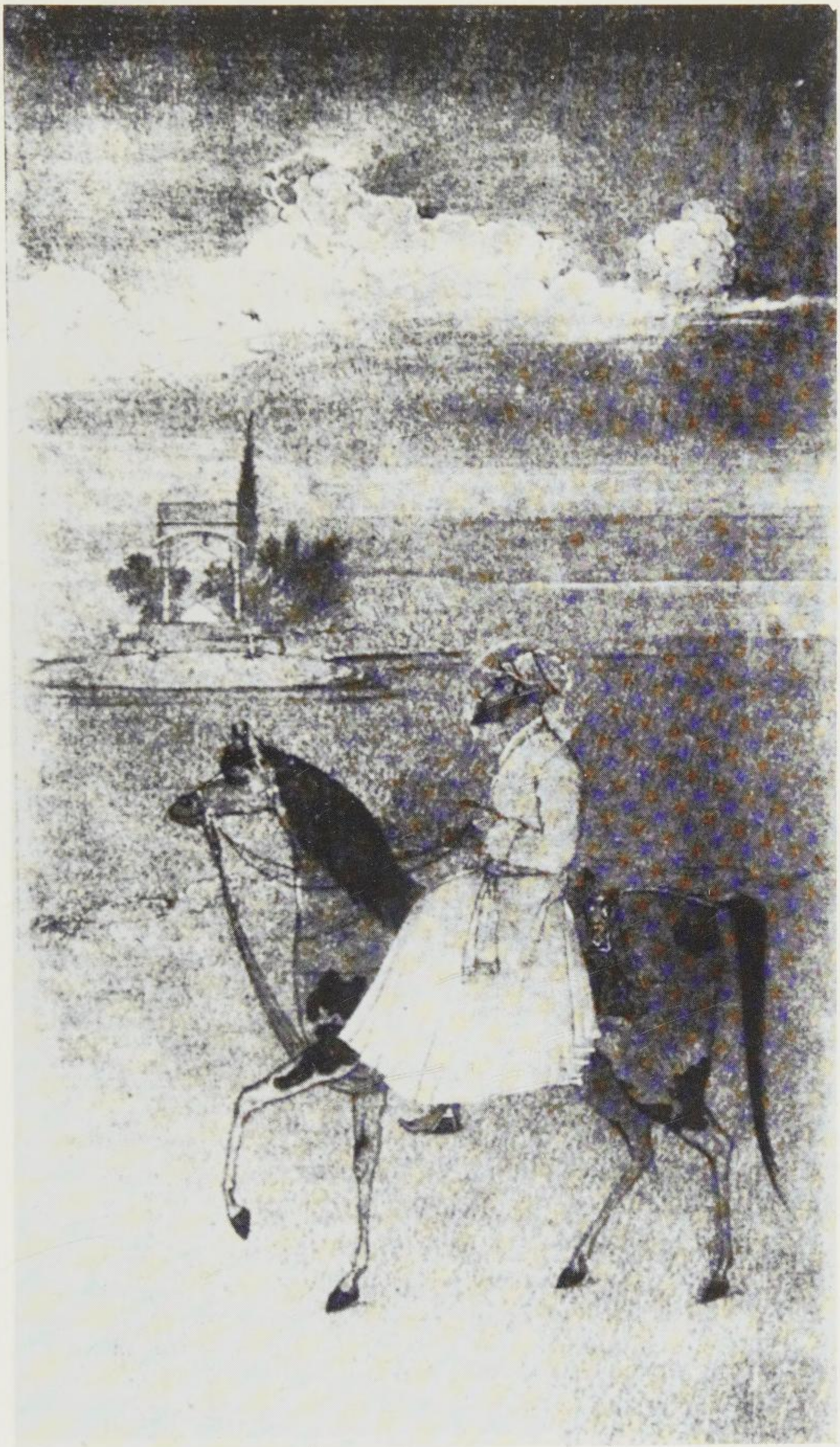
> We are dumbfounded by the picture. Ganesha's skirt-clad mum holds up the brat who is intent on devouring the branch. We are not worried about the godling but about those painters who hold their brushes in their own elephant-trunks and trample time-honoured *Purānic* stories underfoot. If there is storm in a teacup because we do not accept this outrageous picture as an indigenous ideal, we cannot help it.[54]

In 1910 Nivedita claimed in *Modern Review* that the intense quiet of the theme *Shah Jahan Dreaming of the Taj* (Fig. 187) demanded a night treatment though she longed for Abanindranath's colours.[55] *Sāhitya* penned a malicious reply:

> Abanindranath's Shah Jahan dreams of the Taj on horseback. Ordinary mortals dream in bed, or at least leaning against a chair or a wall, but the Shah Jahan of 'Indian art' is unable to do so . . . His carrier is equally wonderful. With its elegantly pointed face, it is hardly recognisable as a horse and is more a cross between a rat and a pig. Abanindranath cannot bear the faint naturalism even of the toy horses of Kalighat . . . Sir Joshua Reynolds was famous for his animals. If Abanindranath takes up animal painting, he may end up as Reynolds; but he should begin with a clay horse as that would be his appropriate model.[56]

Samajpati's hard-hitting reviews occasionally missed their mark in the excitement. While describing Charuchandra as a base flatterer, Samajpati made the fatal slip of confusing Reynolds with Landseer. This was spotted at once by Gangoly and exploited for all its worth. Had Landseer been alive he would have done a portrait of Mr Samajpati, he quipped.[57]

186 Abanindranath Tagore: *Ganesh Janani* (Ganeśa's Mother), watercolour



187 Abanindranath Tagore: *Shah Jahan Dreaming of the Taj*, watercolour

In 1909 *Bhārati* printed *Lila Kamal* (the child-god Kṛṣṇa playing on a large white lotus) without the usual commentary. 'Sadly this time the critic has not provided his explanation', wrote *Sāhitya* in mock sympathy,

> are these great exegetes exhausted? Maybe, but from the title one can only guess that the plinth on which the blue brat stands is a lotus or some such flower. I suppose the cardinal rule of 'Indian art' is that when you draw an object it must not resemble anything natural or be so distorted as to be unrecognisable . . . If this is a painting then every lowly *Patua* at Kalighat will claim to be Raphael. Regrettably, the future artists of Bengal will find inspiration in this ideal . . . But these 'original' masterpieces are only fit to grace *swadeshi* match boxes.[58]

The allusion here was to the poor *swadeshi* products manufactured to uphold the boycott of English goods in 1905. The *Pushpa Rādhā*, glowingly reviewed in *Prabāsi* and *Bhārati* in 1912, drew blood from Samajpati, 'All we can see in the picture are ink smudges. The faint suggestion of the seated Sri Kṛṣṇa may be a "ghoulish" version of the Supreme deity but it is not Kṛṣṇa'.[59]

Abanindranath's *Kājari Dance* (Fig. 188), reproduced in *Bhārati* and *Prabāsi* in 1917, was based on an Orissan dance witnessed by him in 1913. 'The painting of kajari dance by Abanindranath', wrote Samajpati:

> the return of the discarded style. Why is it called painting? Because it has been painted. We are not sure if he wishes to play with paradoxes like his brother [referring to Gaganendranath's cartoon set], but his painting seems to be a caricature of the dance. If he wishes to ridicule the sublime then he certainly has succeeded and we fail to keep up with the turns taken by 'Indian art'. How can I describe these three beautiful creatures with stick-like limbs? Do God's beautiful creation, women, really assume such a grotesque form in this dance? Abanindranath offers the past as an excuse, but in fact the inspiration is not so ancient. We Bengalis still experience these shameful burlesques at wedding processions. Our Indian Raphael has depicted the same crude shameless gestures in his work.[60]

Among Abanindranath's pupils, not only Suren Ganguly's *Lakshman Sen* but also his *Kārttikeya* were attacked. In 1909 Nandalal's Śiva in *Tāndava Dance* was likened to a vulture with graceless long legs, treated in accordance with the 'unflinching' rules of Indian art. A pseudonymous correspondent (O. C. Gangoly?) protested in *Prabāsi* about Samajpati's scurrilous 'name-calling'. Samajpati wrote in reply:

> The conceit of the writer who abused the editor of *Sāhitya*, under the psueudonym, 'Sri' [an honorific prefix like Mr], is truly enjoyable. What *Sāhitya* has written may not be noteworthy for one who shelters behind anonymity. Moreover criticism may be the monopoly of *Prabāsi* and its patrons – but the man who hides behind camouflage . . . and is vile enough to attack from behind like hired assassins is not an object of pity but of revulsion.[61]

The sheer pleasure Samajpati derived from torturing his opponents with his malicious pen is unmistakable here. The year before his death he mellowed sufficiently to give a qualified approval to oriental art, when he confessed to Nandalal that his vitriol was a means of enlivening his paper.

Underneath Samajpati's banter lay the bhadralok perception of oriental art as a threat to naturalism, the universal artistic canon. A conservative Hindu and a *swadeshi*, Samajpati accused the new-fangled art

188 Abanindranath Tagore: *Kājari Dance*, watercolour

of destroying Hindu values, his case strengthened by the fact that many of its staunch advocates were Europeans.[62] He stated:

> we understood that what was unnatural was caricature but that seems to be the highest ideal of oriental art. Blissfully unaware of this bizarre principle, Raphael, Titian and Van Dyck committed a mortal sin in creating what was naturally beautiful. Ordhendra Babu [O.C. Gangoly] asserts that if the *Purāṇas* could imagine supermen with arms reaching down to their thighs, with eyes long enough to touch both ears, with lotus-hands and fresh-grass skin tone, then the modern Indian artist has every right to use similar imagery. We are awestruck by his intelligence.[63]

Sāhitya claimed not to dislike ancient art, but its modern dislocation. In 1910 *Prabāsi* wrote: 'Eastern art is often ridiculed as unnatural but this figure [from Ajanta] proves that this is not so'. *Sāhitya* replied:

> If there exist unnatural elements in eastern art, they cannot be beyond criticism simply because they belong to eastern art . . . Unnaturalness appears to be the very soul of modern oriental art. Indeed does not this flute player's natural posture prove the worthlessness of its feeble imitation by oriental artists? Does it not teach them the glory and utility of naturalism?[64]

In 1912, Samajpati again took an ancient work to demolish the claims of 'pseudo-ancient' orientalism. 'The ancient artist produced beauty not by "strangling" scientific rules or by eliminating nature. The eyes and nose of this figure are remarkably normal. A bird-beak is not substituted for the human nose, nor almonds for eyes. What was possible two thousand years ago has become impossible with the followers of Abanindranath'.[65] The polemicist, however, refused to see any merit in Rajput miniatures:

> We are flabbergasted by Molaram's Kṛṣṇa Subduing the Demon Kaliya. Is this a painting? What style does it come under? Kṛṣṇa's head is shaven in front in the Jaipur fashion. We cannot tell if Kṛṣṇa is subduing Kaliya or scampering up a betel tree. On his head rests a 'blanc-mange' hill. This writer's head is in a spin from gazing at the whirlpool depicted by the artist. The water does swirl all right, but this is a mere puddle. However, what is absent in the picture is amply made up by the note, which must be the special strength of Indian art.[66]

It was clear where *Sāhitya*'s sympathies lay: the universal truths of art and literature were not slaves to fashion. Exaggeration was a flaw in all art, a lesson ignored by orientalists in their claims to 'authenticity': 'Therefore copy Ajanta; but if you innovate or respond sensitively to world art, you tarnish the purity of the Kalighat *pat*. The world evolves, but not Indian art. Such is bigotry!', sighed Samajpati.[67] Indeed his taste in naturalism was no different from Ramananda's. Easy comprehension was the strength of naturalism while the Bengal School seemed to require the

crutches of involved exegesis. One of the problems faced by oriental art was the question that a layman posed, what did it mean? But is this not a common complaint about non-naturalist art even today?

Sāhitya provided its readers with its own version of what was a good picture. It admired the landscapist, Gangooly, as well as B. C. Law, a self-taught academic artist from Bengal. However, the journal's uneven taste is exposed in its championship of a minor painter who died in his youth, Hitendranath Tagore. Manmatha Chakravarty, an academic artist, introduced his works in *Sāhitya* (1910) as 'heroic landscapes', a category used to judge the French Prix de Rome candidates. The weaknesses of *Maharshi Vasistha* and *Bhagna Kutir* were excused on Hitendranath's early death. But if the naturalism of *Sandhyā Devi* had a universal quality, the Europeanised costume of the goddess was its drawback. Interestingly, Hitendranath's works were not considered sufficiently nationalist because of their 'inauthentic' costumes and backgrounds. For Chakravarty, the national artistic ideal was naturalism with historical accuracy.[68]

Sukumar Ray on oriental art

In 1910 Gangoly bombarded Samajpati with learned allusions in response to his complaints about Abanindranath's distortions and his flouting of historical and anatomical accuracy. Why must painting be photographic? Copying the material world was not a precondition of good art. Though the Greeks indulged in it, their masterpieces aimed at a higher ideal. Since the history of world art proved that each culture viewed nature through its cultural filter, the Bengal School was no aberration. As to distorted anatomy, if the 'hyperbolic' descriptions in the *Purāṇas* were accepted, why was there such a fuss about these artists? Indeed no normal human being could represent epic heroes. In the case of Abanindranath's 'horse', the inspiration for a 'spiritual work did not emanate from a mundane stable such as Cook's in Calcutta. Nor was the realism of Rosa Bonheur or Edwin Landseer much use here'.[69]

Blinkered by devices such as 'anatomy', 'perspective' and 'chiaroscuro', Gangoly continued, one failed to see the worth of Indian art. The description of mimesis in *Sāhitya* as common sense was dismissed as childish: 'The so-called educated classes have learned western art from a few half-tone reproductions of the dregs of western art . . . Those who swear by Michelangelo or Raphael can only parrot their names . . . My request is that they use their brains instead to appreciate them'.[70] It was this preaching that prompted Sukumar Ray's intervention. Samajpati was not alone in querying the excesses of the Bengal School. Upendrakishore had done so too. In 1910 his son took exception to orientalist 'mystifications'. Unlike Samajpati, Sukumar knew his western art and swiftly undertook a demolition job, peppering rational arguments with sarcasm

to expose cant and humbug. Sukumar assumed a mock-serious voice; as an 'unsubtle' man he failed to grasp Gangoly's over-refined arguments:

> Naturalism, I understand, has no place in Indian art, especially the slavish copying of objects. The Indian artist renounces the Greek 'blinkers' of anatomy and perspective, used for creating naturalism, preferring to ignore the shapes and colours of real objects. He meditates on the theme and paints what appears in his inner eye. He has no interest in nature, and paradoxically, what he sees with the physical eye is a delusion . . . He is totally indifferent to the outside world of the possible. Concern with nature suits only the materialist, science-obsessed West.[71]

Having slashed through orientalist verbiage, Sukumar returned to one of its favourite refrains: did Indian art embody an aesthetics that was beyond criticism? If spirituality was the soul of Indian art, how was one to judge it? 'Subjects with dreamy eyes, an atmosphere engulfed in mist with a hint of light breaking through, vague expressions, wiry emaciated heroes and heroines that make a mockery of anatomy – are these the signs of spirituality?', he demanded. He knew the orientalist answer: the beauty of Indian art was internal and rested on *bhāva*. But *bhāva* (the 'idea' in art) was surely not exclusive to Indian art. Nature was its starting point as in all art, for art was judged by one criterion: not just the idea, even a fantastic one, but its realisation. What about 'absurdities' like elongated arms, eyes stretching from ear to ear and Kṛṣṇa's green skin, often defended as being based on Sanskrit metaphors? Sukumar's answer was as unequivocal as Balenendranath's: to render metaphors literally was to reduce them to absurdity. Therefore Gangoly's lofty assertion that the exaggerations of the Bengal School were a mark of higher idealism was unacceptable. Sukumar did not object to orientalists pursuing a new ideal and was even prepared to believe in the need for a national revival. Nor was it unnatural for a new movement to react against its predecessor. But the prescribed cure was turning out to be more harmful than the complaint, especially if the new movement acted as judge, counsel and jury in matters of art.[72]

Gangoly tried to sledgehammer the ironies of Sukumar, insisting that one had to renounce a slavish attachment to the Classical ideal in order to grasp Indian achievements. He blended his well-tried methods: erudition, reasonableness and, finally, threats. The mysteries of art were not revealed to rational arguments or expertise, but to intuition alone. He appealed to Sukumar not to be besotted with colonial culture, 'the foreign nurse-maid's milk'; he appealed to his better judgement as an educated Bengali. The respect shown even by western Orientalists towards Hinduism was never given by the Bengali 'rationalists'. The bhadralok, he asserted, had failed to preserve the purity of the Indian ideal; nor did a smattering of English give them automatic access to world art. Sukumar's 'scientific principles' were confined to the Renaissance and had no relevance to Indian art, an understanding of which demanded a deep knowledge of

Indian thought. Then Gangoly invoked the Pre-Raphaelites to defend orientalist re-creations of ancient legends. Finally, he dismissed mimesis as no less conventional than decorative art. After all, did Roger Fry not tell us that 'even the most fantastic and unreal artistic forms must be judged by their own standards?'.[73]

Sukumar denied having slighted Hinduism. The orientalist view of Indian art was at best partial, and the conflict between East and West in essence artificial. While it was probably a pious duty to reproduce the *Purāṇas* faithfully, he said, they could not be the sole inspiration for Indian artists, to the exclusion of contemporary subjects. 'Scientific' laws such as perspective did not diminish Indian art, but enabled it to avoid sterile mannerism. As language had its rules, so art had its constraints in giving form to a mental image. What then was unique about each artistic tradition? Its subjects, a strongly held contention of westernisers throughout the colonial period. Although the conventions of light and shade and other aspects of art differed in different cultures, when it came down to the basics, Pre-Raphaelites, Impressionists and even Indian orientalists could not ignore nature.[74]

The conflict signalled the regrouping of westernisers who refused to accept oriental art as the sole national style or jettison the technical advances of academic art. Gangoly and Ray encapsulate here the intransigence of two entrenched views. In this last essay, Sukumar also clarified their unbridgeable gulf, while pleading for catholicity. But Samajpati, who did not care for intellectual niceties, was elated that a close friend of the Tagores had challenged their dominance. He lifted the entire article from *Prabāsi*, adding gleefully:

> Our young master Ordhendra has abused the reviewer in *Sāhitya* in his usual polite language. You can abuse us but do not treat the 'science' of art, Greek art, [Michel] Angelo and Raphael with contempt. The article proves the triviality of 'Indian art' which needs to be cut down to size . . . Art must be faithful to nature and the perverse arguments of a lowly rustic lawyer [Gangoly's profession] have failed to win the case. We say distortion is not art.[75]

It was the uncritical attitude of the Bengal School, a tendency of militant movements, that *Sāhitya* excoriated:

> Dinesh Babu says that, like literature, art too has the right to exaggerate. This is Dinesh Babu's mandate, and it must be taken as gospel truth. Because he has said so and has written so. Even Kalighat *pat* is great art. Why? Because it is traditional. And Raphael's Madonnas? They do not conform to Indian taste. Hence they are unacceptable.[76]

The complaint was repeated in more caustic language:

> The author in *Prabāsi* claims that we have no right to discuss art but the shameless flatterers have that birthright because they are modern incarnations of Michelangelo, Raphael and Ruskin. Art criticism is their

hand-maiden and they have a natural aptitude for it . . . As *Prabāsi* asserts, if one wishes to understand Nandalal, he should read Nivedita and Coomaraswamy in *Modern Review* . . . In other words, those who do not read English cannot appreciate Indian art. And those who do not agree with Nivedita and Coomaraswamy are fools . . . Well, maybe you people possess a little English, but what you have not read is as vast as the ocean. I know I am mocked because I have not been favoured by the 'cat-eyed' Bhārati [Indian Empire = Britannia?] . . . But fie! Even if something is written in English, or in Hebrew for that matter, please do not swallow it wholesale. Learn to use your judgement and do not view our Hindu world through the distorted vision of Nivedita and Coomaraswamy.[77]

The Tagores' allies were also ridiculed: 'I am not sure which Lord Cornwallis had given the right to the Tagores' hired painters, menials and their lapdog, *Prabāsi*, to monopolise Indian art and its sacred form. But it does seem that this assumed right has become a "Permanent Settlement".' It was because of Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement that the Tagores had acquired their zamindari estate.[78]

The controversy in *Sāhitya* came to an end with the remarks of the archaeologist, Ramaprasad Chanda. The occasion was the humorist Pramatha Chaudhury's (Birbal) assertion in *Bhārati* that common sense was not sufficient for art appreciation. The untutored deemed it vital to imitate European artists, who in their turn imitated nature . . . but to expect the artist's imagination to correspond to the external world was to manacle genius. Chanda was outraged by such snobbery. In 'Nature and the Western Style of Painting', he took up cudgels on behalf of the 'untutored'. Chanda rejected the claim that if one did not care for oriental art, one was not highbrow. The avant-garde of Europe had already discarded naturalism. Since imagination was also common to western art, what was so special about 'oriental' art? Nature study did not merely involve mimesis but interpreting it with imagination. With his knowledge of ancient Indian art, Chanda rejected the charge that it denied nature totally. Describing the Bengal School as distorted, he remarked that there was no inverse relation between creativity and distortion. The animus against naturalism, he diagnosed, was part of a wider western debate; this had been pointed out by Sukumar Ray, and by Surendranath Majumdar in his review of Havell. The art teacher set up non-mimetic 'idealism' as a cornerstone of Indian art. The wilful distortions of the Bengal School under his tutelage were thus an extension of the European quarrel between realism and idealism.[79]

The inner eye of Abanindranath

By the 1920s the debate had lost its bite although Aurobindo Ghosh and Annie Besant, two influential political figures, once again reiterated the

spirituality of Indian art. *Sāhitya* ceased to be controversial and *Bhārati*'s editorship passed out of the hands of the Tagores. But assertions about the orientalist canon continued. By academic standards, the figures in oriental art were distorted, a distortion that could legitimately be ascribed to a different convention. Instead Abanindranath claimed that his figures obeyed his 'inner eye'; he continued to oppose life drawing by means of 'schema and correction'. All he allowed were quick sketches. In 1921, Dhurandhar's 'South Indian dancer' was claimed to be inferior to Abanindranath's 'dancer' because the latter's 'imagination had fuller scope and was less handicapped by any study or memory of living types'.[80]

A clever parody of the 'inner eye' came from the cartoonist Jatin Sen, a former student of Abanindranath turned renegade. In *Bhārati* (1917) Abanindranath explained his artistic approach with the sketch, *Ānkhi Pākhi Dhāyay* (The Eye Chases the Bird) (Fig. 189). This bird was not to be found in the real world but in his own mind, wrote the orientalist. So it was not depicted in the sketch but was suggested by the way the girl looked out of the window. Sen offered the imaginary scenario, 'The Queen Contemplating the Bird' (Fig. 190):

> *An aspiring artist*: If one wishes to make a name, one must do Indian art. Art has become easier with the rise of the Bengal School. All you need is *bhāva*, nothing but *bhāva*. You must forget reality. Once I painted a picture that was sensationally successful. A well-known magazine editor, however, turned it down, alleging that it lacked *bhāva*. I was outraged. What? It lacks *bhāva*? The queen contemplates a bird, emotion wells up in her soul, she is bent double by it, the convolutions of her sari echo her complex thoughts. What expression! And you say she does not express *bhāva*?
>
> *The editor*: If she is contemplating the bird, why then is she looking away?
>
> *Artist*: Ah! That is the power of the work. Forget reality. She is contemplating the bird with her inner eye.[81]

But Abanindranath had also started investigating traditional aesthetics earnestly. In 1909, Coomaraswamy gave him *Rūpamālā*, a Buddhist text from Ceylon, which Abanindranath used in teaching. In 1914–15, he published two important works on aesthetics. *Saḍaṇga* (1915), translated into French by Andrée Karpelès, compared a couplet in the *Kāma Sūtra* with Xie He's 'Six Canons of Art'. Significantly, both the Sanskrit couplet and the Chinese canons were given a Platonic gloss, which confirmed Abanindranath's artistic priorities: *Rūpabheda* (distinguishing forms), which enabled us to distinguish between things as they were and as they appeared to the eye, and *Pramānānī* (measurement and proportion) were interpreted literally, while *bhāva*, the pivot of his work, was given a Victorian slant. Explained as the power of suggestion, it described his own approach: if one wished to depict a beggar, one used indirect means such

189 Abanindranath Tagore: *Ānkhi Pākhi*, print

as his bowl of coins and torn rags rather than making a direct statement.[82]

Lāvanyayojanam (adding grace) was also pure Victorian in controlling excesses by tenderness and dignity. *Śadriśyam* (likeness) was more faithful to the original Sanskrit in stressing the use of visual metaphors by Indian sculptors for different parts of the human anatomy. But a Platonic variant was included: 'In paintings . . . we get proper similitude only when we make our lines and colours correspond to what our mind experiences'. Even the last rule, *varṇikāvabhanga* (colouring, brushwork, etc.), was translated as the technique guided by the mind. These six rules of art were

190 Jatin Sen: *The Queen Contemplating the Bird*, print

then compared with Xie He's six canons to argue their common origin: (i) spiritual tone and life movement; (ii) manner of brushwork in drawing lines; (iii) form in its relation to object; (iv) choice of colours appropriate to the subject; (v) composition and grouping; (vi) copying of exemplars. Following Okakura, Abanindranath imagined a greater likeness in these two doctrines than actually existed and that Xie He's canons were a garbled version of the Indian ideal.[83]

Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy (1914) by Abanindranath refuted the charge that Indian conventions were unconvincing. He had previously claimed to find in *Saḍaṇga* a reference to linear perspective (*prāmānānī*). In his preface to *Some Notes*, Gangoly repeated his arguments against mimesis, but curiously he added a rider to tackle criticisms of orientalist figures; since Indian art was concerned with a transcendental world, it 'could hardly be represented in terms of a physically healthy human body'. Abanindranath's wiry figures were a living proof of this, a form of spirituality denied to Ravi Varma's shockingly healthy women.[84] The treatise was valuable in recording the ideas of a traditional sculptor, Sri Guruswami from Kumbhakonum. Nandalal and Venkatappa illustrated the literary metaphors used by Guruswami. But true to his own temperament, Abanindranath held that the best works of art modified the rules with imagination. In practice, the two treatises were interpreted by the individual student according to his view of freedom and tradition. Abanindranath himself gradually moved away from doctrinaire nationalism. He also turned to the folk art of Bengal, hitherto neglected, especially to *alponā* (ritual patterns drawn on the floor by village women).[85]

PART FOUR
EPILOGUE

When we embarked on the nationalist art movement we had great hopes for it; alas, what went wrong?

Abanindranath Tagore

10 THE PASSING OF THE AGE OF ORIENTAL ART

The 1920s mark the triumph of the Bengal School, the first art movement in India, against the volatile world of *swadeshi* politics. Abanindranath's disciples took his message to the rest of India as heads of art schools in Lucknow, Jaipur, Lahore and Madras, to name the most prominent ones. The Raj welcomed *swadeshi* art, the unthreatening face of nationalism, as an antidote to armed revolution. Curzon even expected the Indian nation to include the British in a synthesis of East and West: a benevolent despot, intolerant of native opinion yet solicitous of native welfare, bent on crushing political demands and yet yielding to no one in protecting the ancient heritage of India.[1]

From 1905 cultural nationalism increasingly held the attention of the beleaguered Raj: disappointed with western education, Indian youth had turned to terrorism, as legitimised by Hindu rituals.[2] In 1925, Lord Ronaldshay, sometime governor of Bengal, conceded that the 'sources from which the revolutionary movement and the Tagore school of painting drew their inspiration were identical . . . [but] one called for the severest condemnation, while the other was worthy of all praise'.[3] He argued that

> a man need not be a politician to be a Nationalist in the sense in which the word is defined by Mr. B. C. Pal; and the nationalism of a man who is not a politician is a thing of greater significance than that of a man who is. Dr Rabindranath Tagore, for example, is a poet, and for vast numbers of Indians he stands for the very embodiment of the National Ideal . . . [he speaks] not so much of tyranny and injustice – the favourite catch-cries of a certain school of politicians – of a foreign administration, as of the genius which is her own.[4]

In 1919, he discussed with 'two charming members of the famous Tagore family' ways of encouraging *swadeshi* art. In his opening address to the first show, for which he made available his official residence, he made clear his preference for an artistic expression of Indian unrest.[5]

Swadeshi nationalism had helped restore Hindu self-respect. The British empire, a self-confident nation with a strong sense of identity, rested on

cultural rather than military superiority. In holding India up as culturally superior to the West, Indians were simply turning the weapon against their rulers. But *swadeshi* nationalism was no less remarkable as an instance of cultural encounters between East and West. Indian nationalists joined forces with the western critics of progress who were expecting the dawn of a new millennium. These critics, Annie Besant, Nivedita, Havell and Coomaraswamy, viewed India's values as a challenge to western materialism. Besant was a pioneer in educating Indian youth in Hindu values. Yet her resistance to the Raj, she insisted, was non-political. Her entry into active politics in 1914 probably had as much to do with seeking to regain her popularity as with her belief that Indians were now capable of self-government. Nivedita, who profoundly identified with Hindu aspirations, may have supplied the revolutionary groups in Bengal with books on the Irish Fenians and the Italian Carbonari. Yet, she discouraged boys in her care from engaging in terrorism as 'aimless or wrongly-purposed change'.[6]

The Times (London) obituary remarked that Havell glorified 'Indian culture with a zeal that bordered on fanaticism'.[7] Yet as a bureaucrat, Havell was even less sympathetic to revolution; his *swadeshi* doctrine favoured the reconstruction of rural life by renouncing the West; *swadeshi* was a state of mind, as seen in the *ghats* (paved river bank) of Varanasi, the quintessence of the eastern spirit, the unbroken chain of tradition. An outspoken critic of the Extremists, Havell defined 'false' *swadeshi* as a noisy form of sedition against the state, learnt from the nationalist doctrines of Europe, but unsuited to India's cultural rebirth. Havell was especially caustic about Congress economic policy, which waged a war of attrition against Manchester, and yet wished to benefit from western progress.[8] Coomaraswamy was in total accord with him, going so far as to admire Curzon for his pro-tradition utterances. Cultural autonomy, declared the critic, was infinitely preferable to political independence.[9]

Modern cultural nationalism has generally preceded political agitation for independence; it often works against activism, giving rise to conflicts among nationalists, as in Ireland and in India during the *swadeshi* unrest. The poets of the Irish literary revival, especially Yeats and A.E. (George Russell) carefully avoided political involvement. This led to their being accused by the Fenians of shirking political reality. Cultural nationalists of India faced an agonising choice as politics entered a militant phase after 1905: should they sever all links with the government or not, since colonialism and nationalism did not mix? The priorities of cultural nationalism had been fixed in the early moderate era of the Congress. The agenda of the cultural nationalists, like that of Gokhale and the Moderates, contained no provision for the removal of the British. This undermined their credibility, as the demand for political independence by the Extremists led by Tilak and Aurobindo grew more insistent. This period was to end with the split between the Moderates and the

Extremists at the Congress session of Surat in 1907. Caught between the Raj and the revolutionaries, the four idéologues remained convinced that Hindu values were inimical to violence.[10]

The Indian nationalists were equally ambivalent in their response to the Raj. The Tagores had done much to create a pride in Indian culture. In 1905, Rabindranath had spoken out against government repression. But as a cultural nationalist, Tagore found it hard to accept terrorism. His cosmopolitan outlook soon tired of shrill Hinduism, whose limited horizon he subtly exposed in his two novels, *Gorā* and *The Home and the World*. And yet the romantic appeal of young men who were prepared to die for the cause could not be ignored by cultural nationalists. Rabindranath's dislike of violence while admiring the heroism of the revolutionaries is instructive here. On the other hand, if the limitations of the cultural nationalists stemmed from their working within the framework of the empire, the weakness of the active revolutionaries lay in their lack of any clear objectives other than the overthrow of British power. They seldom questioned western cultural dominance in the way that cultural nationalists did.[11]

The cleavage between cultural nationalism and political activism considerably narrowed during the Gandhian *satyāgraha* in the 1920s. The Mahatma agreed with cultural nationalists in rejecting western values. But he went further in his total, albeit non-violent, struggle against the Raj. Not only did he give Havell's spinning-wheel, a symbol of economic resistance, a nationwide resonance, but he mobilised Indians on an unprecedented scale. Moreover, even though Hindu nationalism remained a force in politics beyond the 1920s, the earlier exclusive Hindu movement had been dealt a hefty blow by Gandhi. The decline of the Bengal School coincided with this period when art and politics parted company; in Gandhi's programme there was no room for art with the possible exception of Nandalal Bose's decoration of the Haripura Congress venue, done at Gandhi's behest. In retrospect, the two decades that preceded Gandhi had taught artists valuable lessons, when art enjoyed an exalted place in national life. Many of them had felt impelled to judge their work against the yardstick of *swadeshi* ideology.[12]

While the decline of cultural politics affected artists, other reasons for the lost impetus of oriental art were no less significant. Pan-Asian sentiments were overtaken by militant nationalism and socialist revolutions in Asia. As an aesthetic movement, oriental art faced a many-pronged assault, even as it overcame the opposition of academic artists. But cracks appeared as early as 1910. Roger Fry wrote in a period of hostility to narrative art: '"Siddhas of the Upper Air" [shows] that, however anxiously these artists strive to adopt the formulae of their ancestors, the spirit that comes to expression is that of the American magazine illustrator'.[13] This impressed Coomaraswamy, who reluctantly acceded to the verdict. He gradually withdrew from the Bengal scene and

after 1915 he disowned oriental art altogether, delving more and more into ancient Indian art.[14]

In the 1920s Abanindranath expressed disenchantment with art as propaganda, retreating into his private universe of images. His wash painting gained greater richness as it shed its didactic element. In his lectures to the Calcutta University he sounded sceptical about politics inspiring artists; art was the fruit of cultivation, not of hectoring, a simple fact forgotten in the *swadeshi* upsurge. Renouncing what he held so dear, and with a hint of self-regret, Abanindranath suggested that revivalism became an unnatural obsession, so as to lose touch with reality, tolerating only a nostalgia for the past. Instead of art being part of everyday life, it became a museum object. A more serious indictment of the Bengal School can hardly be imagined.[15]

The cooling of Abanindranath's ardour for *swadeshi* art should cause no surprise. The chief object of orientalist attack, namely academic naturalism, had virtually vanished from mainstream European art. This was the age of modernism. In 1922 Benoy Sarkar fired the first salvo against orientalist parochialism in 'Futurism of Young Asia', an unashamed celebration of modern art. The avant-garde from the West made inroads into Indian consciousness with an exhibition of Bauhaus artists in Calcutta in 1922–3. It was a momentous event in the city, though it did not have an immediate effect on artists.[16] Abanindranath himself was unimpressed with 'modern infectionism', but Gaganendranath's art took a new, Cubist turn. Rabindranath had publicly supported oriental art, though he had misgivings about it. What was revealed in the late 1920s was his own art, hidden until now from the public gaze. The poet, whose expressionist imagination was at odds with orientalism, renounced artistic nationalism for a universal language of art.[17] In the same period, Jamini Roy, the last major artist before independence,[18] had begun to assemble elements for his own synthesis of East and West. Roy's 'authentic' interpretation preferred the eternal village India to historicism.

The death knell of oriental art was sounded by Amrita Sher-Gil, the first Paris-trained Indian artist, in 1941. In a famous radio broadcast she said: 'The work of the Bengal School is . . . entirely illustrative in quality, and depends for its popularity not on pictorial merit, but on romantic appeal . . . [the paintings] demand no attention; unlike the work of the great continental artists, or an Ajanta fresco, which force themselves on the consciousness, arousing serious intense emotion and causing profound reactions'.[19] This gifted artist offered in her paintings a personal, melancholic vision of 'true' India, a talent cut short at twenty-eight. These developments brought to an end oriental art as a movement, leading to the rise of individual artists. They signalled future developments, but a future built on the foundations of the first art movement and its concern with cultural identity, a concern that still dominates Indian art.

NOTES

(Fuller titles of works are given in the Bibliography; Bengali journals with the Bengali era: 1307 = approximately 1900. Dates abbreviated as follows: 2 May, 1900 = 2.5.1900)

1. THE PHENOMENON: OCCIDENTAL ORIENTATIONS

1 A. Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, London, 1975, on the westerniser/slavophile debate in ninteenth-century Russia (admittedly, Russian westernisation had a different connotation from the Asian since Russians belong within European Christian culture). G. Norris repeats the liberal view of westernisation, i.e., Russia emerged 'from a dark age towards the far-sighted reign of Peter the Great', 'Khovanshchina', *The Radio Three Magazine*, London, Nov. 1982, 19.

2 E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, London, 1973, a critique of the western model of development; on critiques of western scientific epistemology by T. Kuhn (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, 1962), and his interpreters (see especially F. Crewe's review of *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, ed. Q. Skinner, Cambridge, 1986, *The New York Review of Books*, 29 May 1986). Critiques of early anthropologists by cultural relativists and functionalists, *Rationality*, ed. B. Wilson, Oxford, 1970; M. Hollis and S. Lukes, *Rationality and Relativism*, Oxford, 1982.

3 W. G. Archer, *India and Modern Art*, London, 1959.

4 Archer, *India*, 43. Gaganendranath is discussed by me in a study of Indian art between 1922–47 (in active preparation). Space does not allow a detailed consideration of the whole question of influence versus artistic intention here but see Baxandall (below, note 9).

5 Historicism (German: *Historismus*) in the eighteenth century focussed on the fundamental difference between the past and us (*Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. P. P. Wiener, II, New York, 1973, 456 ff.) but its modern meaning as historical determinism stems from Karl Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism*, London, 1957. In architecture N. Pevsner uses it to describe *fin-de-siècle* Viennese buildings, a style that 'archaeologises' the past (*Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, II, London, 1968, 95 ff., 243 ff.). Neoclassical and

Gothic Revivals are two earliest such cases (J. A. Walker, *Glossary of Art, Architecture and Design Since 1945*, London, 1973, 270); I use the term here to describe the modern appropriations of exotic cultures that ignore their historic and cultural contexts. This becomes possible since all cultural products are now available in museums and in reproductions divorced from their contexts.

6 Wassily Kandinsky in M. Seuphor, *Abstract Painting*, London, 1962, 44.

7 S. Ringbom, 'Transcending the Visible: The Generation of the Abstract Pioneers', 131–53; C. Douglas, 'Beyond Reason: Malevich, Matiushin, and Their Circles', 185–99; in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985*, ed. M. Tuchman, Los Angeles, 1987.

8 On the distinction by western writers between avant-garde borrowings of primitive art and non-western artists' borrowing of western art, W. Rubin (*Primitivism in Modern Art*, New York, 1985). A believer in the universality of art, he explains western borrowings as coincidental; they simply demonstrate 'affinities' between tribal artists and the avant-garde. Substituting 'appropriation' for 'affinity', T. McEllivey argues that tribal objects are denied their cultural contexts by the teleological view of western art which denies any breaks in western art history or refuses to admit that western artists constantly renewed their vision through outside influences ('Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief', *Artforum*, November, 1984, 54–60 and Rubin's answers, February 1985, 42 ff. and May 1985, 63 ff.). While McEllivey rightly criticises Rubin, he exaggerates his comparison of 'aesthetic' functions of European art with different functions, including ritual ones, of tribal art. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Also J. Clifford, 'Histories of the Tribal and the Modern' (*Art in America*, April 1985, 164–215) and H. Foster, ('The "Primitive" Unconscious of Modern Art', *October*, 34, Fall 1985, 45–70). In a forthcoming book, David Napier contrasts these self-conscious borrowings from tribal art with 'a true absorption of' holistic primitive cultures'. Also *Art Journal*, Summer, 1988, vol. 47, No. 2, 'Object and Intellect: Interpretations of Meaning in African Art', ed. J. Drewal plus his comments, 71–4; R. T. Soppelsa's application of Panofskian iconology to Akan terracottas of the Ivory Coast, 147–53 (*Art Journal*, Summer, 1988, vol. 47, No. 2). But even with these ritual objects, one would like to know if beauty, skill and pleasure mattered to their creators or not.

9 The concept of 'influence' used in tracing artistic styles is criticised by M. Baxandall as an obsession with genealogy, which misses more interesting aspects of cultural encounters, such as 'purposive behaviour' in an artist: 'Influence is a curse of art criticism primarily because of wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who the patient: it seems to reverse the active–passive relation which the historical actor experiences and inferential beholder will wish to take into account . . .' (*Patterns of Intention*, Berkeley, 1985, 85 ff.). On cultural diffusion in eighteenth-century thought, and its subsequent eclipse, J. S. Slotkin, *Readings in Early Anthropology*, London, 1965.

10 E. Said, *Orientalism*, London, 1977. In fairness, Said has revised his views substantially since 1977. Also his works are informed with a humanism and complexity absent in his followers. 'Race, Writing and Difference', *Critical Inquiry*, Autumn 1985, on colonial discourse as a text, and responses to the

issue in *Critical Inquiry*, September 1986. One of the problems may lie in the communication model of encoding and decoding (used by structuralists) to explain imperialism, thereby denying the communicator a role (*The New York Review of Books*, 30 March 1989 on D. Sperber and D. Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Oxford, 1986).

11 E. H. Gombrich, 'Technology and Tradition in the Arts', *Three Cultures* (Erasmus Symposium), Rotterdam, 1989, 169–72, on the importance of 'technology' in artistic development insofar as painting is a form of mimesis. Traditions that acquired mimetic tricks were considered superior by the patrons and artists in countries that lacked them (Italy vis-à-vis the rest of Europe and nineteenth-century Europe vis-à-vis the rest of the world). So the question is, would India have sought to acquire mimetic inventions had she not been colonised?

12 Gramscian hegemony, in the sense of cultural dominance, i.e., a class can establish its moral and cultural superiority with 'a minimum use of force' (J. Joll, *Gramsci*, London, 1977, 98–9), explains British success in ruling over a complex society like India (cf. G. Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, London, 1990 on the use of English as a hegemonic tool). Gramsci's ideas on newspapers and associations in spreading a dominant ideology partly explain the spread of European art in India (see ch. 2).

13 C. Geertz, 'Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought', *The American Scholar*, Spring 1986, 165–79. A fascinating example of colonial interaction was a recent exhibition (*The Raj*, ed. C. A. Bayly, London, 1990).

14 E. H. Carr, *What is History?*, London, 1987, 84.

15 D. Rochfort, *The Murals of Diego Rivera*, London, 1986, 16.

16 *Cultura*, Revista Trimestral, 2nd yr, 5, Jan.–Mar. 1972 (1922–1972 commemorative edn lent by Annie Posthuma).

17 See below, ch. 10; Nandalal Bose's posters and mural decoration of the Congress *pandals* (marquees) feature in my forthcoming work (note 4 above).

18 Latin American colonialism celebrated 'hybridity', but nonetheless made the 'Indian' contribution problematic. Unlike India, early Latin American artists, who saw themselves as Europeans, did not turn to Pre-Columbian culture. In the 1920s, as international modernism sharpened questions of identity, Mexican revolutionary artists asserted a closeness with Indians. But the embarrassing questions remained: who were the true Mexicans? Rivera's links with Indian art were said to be tenuous. Nonetheless his attempts to make art serve the people is significant. Brazilian artists declared their solidarity with Indians at the *Semana de Arte Moderna* (1922) at São Paolo, although Tarsila do Amaral's Cubist works were attacked as artificial. In Peru, Sabogal's romantic art conferred a new dignity to the Indians, while Joachim Torres-Garcia initiated a cultural revival in Argentina. In the 1930s, the Cuban Pedro Figari's nostalgic evocation of Indian, Creole and African cultures is reminiscent of developments in India (introduction, chs 2, 6, 7, 9 in *Art in Latin America, The Modern Era*, ed. D. Ades, London, 1989).

19 D. Shively, ed., *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture*, New Jersey, 1971, preface, chs. II, III, VI; and J. M. Rosenfield, 'Western Style Painting

the Early Meiji Period and Its Critics', 181–200; T. Haga, 'The Formation of Realism in Meiji Painting: The Artistic Career of Takahashi Yuichi', 181–256. P. D. Curtin, 'African Reactions in Perspective', *Africa and the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture*, Madison (Wisconsin), 1972, 231–44 on the westernisation/modernisation process from the African viewpoint. Political scientists disagree on which of the two terms to use, including Shively, implying that societies can westernise without necessarily modernising. I use these categories more in terms of how westernisation was perceived by Indians rather than as absolute categories. The first work on Indian colonial art from an Indian perspective was A. Mitra, *Four Painters, the Forces Behind the Modern Movement*, Calcutta, 1965, and on the nationalist art movement, R. Parimoo, *The Paintings of the Three Tagores*, Baroda, 1973. T. Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism c. 1850–1920*, Cambridge, 1993 came out as my book went to press.

20 E. M. J. Venniyoor, *Raja Ravi Varma*, Trivandrum, 1981, 72 on Varma; M. R. Anand, 'The Four Initiators of Contemporary Experimentalism', *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 2, December 1964, 1–2 on Tagore and Roy. P. R. Ramachandra Rao, *Modern Indian Painting*, Madras, 1953, 12: 'Ravi Varma stands at the threshold of modern Indian painting, a historical failure' (facile realism, second-rate efficiency, depths of bathos, appalling taste). Words like 'modern', 'experiment' and 'crisis' are commonly used in India, as if they had a life of their own irrespective of their cultural origins. Rao writes that Abanindranath freed himself from the decorative art of Delhi and Patna which had degenerated, and from the seductive charms of banal naturalism. How does one gauge decadence? The power of such ideas is evident in H. Goetz, 'The Modern Movement of Art in India: A Symposium: i. The Great Crisis, From "Traditional" to Modern Indian Art', *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 1, June 1962, 8–19.

21 In the last century Classical taste was rejected by anti-Classicists, notably Gothic Revivalists who, however, defined Gothic merely in terms of what Classical art was not (E. H. Gombrich, 'Norm and Form', in *Norm and Form*, London, 1966, 81–104). This negative definition was also used by modernists to attack the Renaissance. Cézanne, who stressed the formal qualities of a picture by reducing all references to the outside world, was the first artist to reject Giottoesque consistent lighting. Cubists proclaimed that a picture was only a picture by further destroying the illusion of solid form (K. Badt, *The Art of Cézanne*, Berkeley, 1965; J. Golding, *Cubism, A History and an Analysis*, London, 1968).

22 D. Hebdige, 'After the Masses', *Marxism Today*, Jan. 1989, 48–53. Clifford, 'Histories', *Art in America* (see note 8 above), 69, on the primitivism of the avant-garde.

23 A striking instance of Mughal syncretism is a painting that blends the 'Descent From the Cross' theme with 'The Last Judgement' (P. Mitter in L. Gowing, *A History of Art*, I, London, 1983, 160). On political implications of such syncretism, E. Koch, *Shah Jahan and Orpheus*, Graz, 1988.

24 R. Wittkower, 'Individualism in Art and Artists', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12, 3, Jul.–Sept. 1961, 291–302. Allami Abu'l-Fazl, *Akbarnama* on Mughal artists (tr. H. Beveridge), Calcutta, 1907–12; B. N. Goswamy on

eighteenth-century Brahmin artists, 'Pahari Painting: the family as a basis of style', *Marg*, 21, 4, 1968, 17–62. But did they enjoy a high status, since popular painters (*chitrakaras*) were low status? (J. P. Das, *Puri Paintings*, New Delhi, 1982, 18 ff). Even Mughal artists were dependent on emperors who decided the subject-matter and even style (western art was introduced into the court mainly because of Akbar and Jahangir). The word 'individualism', related to progress and nationalism, is of nineteenth-century western origin, although Renaissance Humanists were the first individualists, as argued in Jakob Burckhardt's *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 1860 (S. Lukes, *Individualism*, Oxford, 1973). L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, London, 1970, on the ideology of European individualism as opposed to Indian caste hierarchy.

25 The Jaipur *Razmnama* captures Daswanth's violent drama. Abu'l-Fazl 'Allami, *Ain i Akbari*, I, tr. H. Blockmann, Calcutta, 1873, 8, on Daswanth. On melancholy, M. and R. Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists*, Stuttgart, 1965. On the *topos* of genius and melancholy, see below, ch. 3, note 51.

26 Wittkower, 'Individualism'. 'Gentleman artists' belonged to the English-educated, especially the Bengali bhadralok, central figures in cultural nationalism, whose role in the freedom struggle has come under scrutiny. Whether they were collaborators or idealists who challenged British supremacy (perhaps they were a mixture of both as often happens in human transactions?), their rise was closely linked to Indian westernisation (A. Seal, *Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1968; J. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth-Century Bengal*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968; E. Leach and S. Mukherjee, *The Elites in South Asia*, Cambridge, 1970).

27 M. Archer, *Natural History Drawings in the India Office Library*, London, 1962. M. and W. G. Archer, *Indian Art for the British*, London, 1955. B. S. Cohn on the role of these paintings in 'domesticating' the exotic for the effective control of Company territory ('The Past in the Present: India as Museum of Mankind', unpublished paper). Political chaos in India did not necessarily entail social decline (C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, Cambridge, 1983).

28 D. Sen, *Brihat Banga*, Calcutta, 1934, 449. W. G. Archer, *Kalighat Paintings*, London, 1971; H. Knizkova, *The Drawings of the Kalighat Style*, Prague, 1975.

29 Sen, *Brihat Banga*, 451.

30 A. Paul (ed.), *Woodcut Prints of Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, Calcutta, 1983, 8; Archer, *Kalighat Paintings*, 12 ff. Lady in a balloon: source R. P. Gupta.

31 W. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, London, 1955, 219–53. Here too the artisan vocation was penetrated by higher castes (N. Sarkar, 'Calcutta Woodcuts: Aspects of a Popular Art',' in Paul, *Woodcut Prints*, 19. On Bengali graphic arts, C. Bandopadhaya (ed.), *Dusha Bachharer Bānglā Boi, Smarakpatra*, Calcutta, 1978, especially R. P. Gupta, 'Bangla Chhabir Boi' (92–4); also essays by Gupta and Sarkar in *Calcutta the Living City*, I, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri, Calcutta, 1990, 128–45.

32 Quoted by N. Sarkar, in Paul, *Woodcut Prints*, 14.

33 Archer, *Natural History Drawings*, 9. Sarkar (in Paul, *Woodcut Prints*), 17. The copy of *Annadā Mangal* in the Bangiya Sahitya Parisad Library, Calcutta.
34 P. Mitter, 'Introduction: 1, 1858–1900', *Photography in India: 1858–1980, a Survey*, London, 1982, 1–4.
35 M. Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, London, 1979, 141.
36 M. Archer, *India*, 58, 70–4, 97, 100.
37 On Jensen, see below, ch. 5. He showed at the Calcutta exhibition of 1883 and has works in the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta; also *Catalogue of the Pictures and Sculptures in the Collection of The Maharaja Tagore*, Calcutta, 1905, 57.
38 M. Archer, *India*, 80–1.
39 Little is known about Raghunath except that he painted Maharani Jumna Bai in Surat in 1878 (see below, ch. 2). Naidu was in collections in Calcutta; see also *Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, 12, 1909, 110 (pl. 9 now in Victoria and Albert Museum). On Sunkel, Geonelli and Dey, K. Sarkar, *Bhārater Bhāskar o Chitrashilpi*, Calcutta, 1984, 48; *Tagore Catalogue*, 21–3, 48, 63–4, 101–2.
40 Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 97. On differences between Indian and European painting methods, see below, chs 2 and 5. M. Archer, *Company Drawings in the Indian Office Library*, London, 1972. The stylistic differences between the water-colours and the oils are marginal (Tanjore paintings in Madras Museum and the Jayachamarajendra Gallery, Mysore). On non-art-school oils, J. Appasamy, 'Early Oil Paintings in Bengal', *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, 32, Apr. 1985, 5–9, classified by her as sacred, narrative and secular. On the misnomer Dutch-Bengal painting and its rise, R. P. Gupta, 'Ādhunik Bānglār Chitrashilpa ār grāphic ārts', *Chaturanga*, Oct. 1986, 461–6. The closest analogy of these oils would be Qajar oil paintings of Iran. T. N. Mukharji, *Art Manufacturers of India*, Calcutta, 1888, 14–15, documents 'rude oil paintings produced in certain parts of the country, notably in Jagannath' (examples at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London).
41 S. Nilsson, *British Architecture in India 1750–1850*, London, 1968, 110.
42 See F. Gaekwad and V. Fass, *The Palaces of India*, London, 1980.
43 H. and A. Goetz, *Maharaja Fatesingh Museum, Baroda*, Baroda, 1961, vi–vii.
44 Source: the Sri Bhavani Museum's curator.
45 *Marble Palace Art Gallery Catalogue*, Calcutta, 1976. A large collection belonged to the Tagore Castle (note 37 above). There is no study of Salar Jung Museum as yet.
46 W. G. Archer, *Kalighat Paintings*, 91. English visitors to Satara court saw framed glass paintings hanging on walls (Appasamy, see below, ch. 5, note 122).
47 See below, ch. 8.

2. ART EDUCATION AND RAJ PATRONAGE (1850–1900)

1 Spencer in G. B. Kauvar and G. C. Sorensen, eds, *The Victorian Mind*, London, 1969, 51–65. The targets of the movement for the diffusion of useful knowledge were women, workers and the colonised (inferior gender,

class and race respectively); on educational efforts in Britain for the disadvantaged, J. Burna, '"From Polite Learning" to "Useful Knowledge" 1750–1850', *History Today*, 36, Apr. 1986, 21–9.

2 Victorian paternalism was not a coherent doctrine but an attitude that emphasised the 'fatherly' duties of 'ruling fairly, guiding and helping' and strictly supervising the moral development of the less developed. In Alexander Korda's film, *Sanders of the River* (1935), when Sanders the good ruler bids farewell to his subjects, African chiefs stand in line and chant: 'Lord Sandy, you have been our father and we shall be on good behaviour while you are away. For we know that you will punish us severely if we do not do so.' Ironically, the main actor was Paul Robeson, an ex-communist, while Jomo Kenyatta acted as an extra in order to finance his studies at the London School of Economics (ITV film, *Black Man's Burden*, and J. Richards, 'Films and the Empire: Britain in the 1930s' in *Literature and Imperialism*, ed. B. Moore-Gilbert, London, 1983, 159–69). If 1844 was the peak of paternalism, it informed attitudes as late as the 1930s. See ch. 6 on the distrust of Raj paternalists of both nationalists and bureaucrats but not of authoritarian rule (D. Roberts, *Paternalism in Early Victorian England*, London, 1979). H. Smith on the history of *The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, Halifax, 1974.

3 The western artistic method forms the central argument of E. H. Gombrich's classic *Art and Illusion*, London, 1962. There is no good account of Indian artistic practices but cf. P. Brown, *Indian Painting under the Mughals*, Oxford, 1924. On the elite, see ch. 1, pp. 9, 13–14, above.

4 D. B. Parasnis, *Poona in Bygone Days*, Bombay, 1921, 53. P. Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, Oxford, 1977, 160. M. Archer, *Early Views of India*, London, 1980, 190–2. After Wales' sudden death, Malet looked after his daughter, eventually marrying her. See Archer, *Early Views*, pls. 149–171 for works based on Gangaram's collaboration.

5 *The Constitution of the Calcutta Lyceum*, Calcutta (undated) (source: Swapan Majumdar).

6 *Report of the Proceedings of a Public Meeting Held at the Town Hall*, Calcutta, dated 26.2.1839, to establish The Calcutta Mechanics' Institution and the School of Arts (source: Swapan Majumdar). The mechanics' institutes in Britain provided cultural distractions to protect young men from 'impure' thoughts and 'self-abuse'.

7 Report on Public Instruction, Madras, 1954–5, *Records of the Madras Government*, No. XVII, 44–6.

8 Report of the Director of Public Instruction, Bombay, 1855–6, 132. Jamsethji Jijibhai's letter (9.5.1853) to Governor of Bombay in *Story of Sir J. J. School of Art 1857–1957*, Bombay, 1957, 14–16.

9 RPI, Bombay, 1856–7, 97. *Story of J. J.*, 16–20; *Bureau of Education in India (Selections from Educational Records)*, Part 2 (1840–59), Calcutta, 1922, 80, 351.

10 *Rules of the Society for the Promotion of Industrial Art*, Calcutta, May 1856, 1 (source: Swapan Majumdar).

11 J. C. Bagal, 'History of the Govt. College of Art & Craft', *Centenary Government College of Art & Craft Calcutta*, Calcutta, 1964, 1–5.

12 P. Kripal, *Selections from the Educational Records of the Government of India*, I, New Delhi, 1960, 569. On the founding of Departments of Public

tion, *The Gazetteer of Bombay City*, III, Bombay, 1910, 117. Can Ruskin's strictures on art and nature be detected here although the date 1854 is a little early?

13 R. Temple, *Oriental Experience*, London, 1883, 485.

14 Temple, *Oriental Experience*, 485. See also Temple, *Men and Events of My Time*, London, 1883, 278; Temple, *India in 1880*, London, 1881, 154.

15 Temple, *Oriental Experience*, 485. Mitter, *Monsters*, 245, 269.

16 S. Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, London, 1970, 60–127. S. C. Hutchinson, *The History of the Royal Academy*, London, 1968; C. Frayling, *The Royal College of Art*, London, 1987, 12–15, on the painter Haydon's campaign for the public support of art leading to the 1835 parliamentary select committee. Haydon, pro-fine arts and the man behind the reforms, was left out of the committee, led by the German authority on English taste, G. Waagen (L. Venturi, *History of Art Criticism*, New York, 1964, 232).

17 Mitter, *Monsters*, ch. 5; Frayling, *Royal College*, 35–46 on Cole's success, a brilliant lobbyist but not an artist or initially even an art critic.

18 The classic work on Victorian Britain is J. L. and B. Hammond, *The Bleak Age*, London, 1947. On the economics of empire, R. Dutt, *An Economic History of India*; on radical critics, Mitter, *Monsters*, ch. 5. Sir Charles Trevelyan's Report to the Select Committee of the House of Lords (21.6.1853) on public instruction in Bengal mentions Owen Jones and others who praised the Indian contribution at 1851 exhibition (Second Report from Sel. Committee, Hse of Lords, for betterment of India (Education)). *Parliamentary Papers, Indian Territories, Reports of the Select Committee, House of Lords*, II, London, 1853, 154–5.

19 J. Fisher, *An Illustrated Record of the Retrospective Exhibition Held at South Kensington 1896*, London, 1897, iv.

20 *Parliamentary Papers*, 1853, 156.

21 K. Sarkar, *Shilpi Saptak*, Calcutta, 1975, 15–17. Bagal, 'History', 5. Gen. Report on Public Instruction, Bengal, 1863–4, 62–3; RPI Bombay, 1867–8, 51. On Crowe, see below, note 41.

22 Macdonald, *History*, 188–99 and appendix C (attached). Frayling, *Royal College*, 41–2 on Redgrave's standard syllabus which had the 'advantage' of uniformity. E. R. Taylor, *Elementary Art Teaching*, London, 1893, xi–xv, reflects the spread of South Kensington ideas on drawing.

23 Taylor, *Elementary*, 1.

24 Macdonald, *History*, 74–80; 188. In fairness to Dyce, even before him, the design schools had started discouraging life classes. Nor was he able to abolish life classes altogether, though restricting them to ornamental drawing; however, his associate Wilson was more stringent in this (Frayling, *Royal College*, 18–19).

25 W. Dyce, *The Drawing Book of the Government School of Design*, London, 1842–3, i–iv (introduction).

26 Macdonald, *History*, 69–70, on golden section and geometry in Renaissance art, 44–9; Frayling, *Royal College*, 41–2.

27 T. H. Fielding, *Synopsis of Practical Perspective, Linear and Aerial*, London, 1843, vii. Interestingly, this was a textbook for the military college of the East India Company at Addiscombe. On the French stress on the fine arts which

taught a fluency that was lacking in the mechanical excellence of British schools, Macdonald, *History*, 27, 30, 79, 117.

28 M. V. Dhurandhar, *Kalāmandirantil Ekechallish Varsham*, Bombay, 1940. F. Borzello, *The Artist's Model*, London, 1982, 86 ff. on Bohemianism among artists in France. Macdonald, *History*, 188, 193: J. Milner, *The Studios of Paris*, London, 1988; on prizes and scholarships, Frayling, *Royal College*, 35. Wilson's rules made the school more regimented: students sat down immediately on arrival. They were not permitted to chat, move about, or apply to do painting or sculpture and were expelled for irregular attendance. Elementary drawing students were not promoted until they had mastered outline drawing. No aspirant artist was admitted to the school (Frayling, *Royal College*, 22).

29 RPI (Madras) 1854–5, 44–6; 1856–7, 65–9. *School of Arts, Madras* (Prospectus), Madras, 1916, 7, 15, 25.

30 RPI (Bombay) 1857–8, 99.

31 *Madras* (Prospectus) 9, 19 ff.

32 *Madras* (Prospectus) 15–17. Macdonald, *History*, 89 on Wilson's historicism.

33 RPI (Madras) 1854–6, 44–6; 1856–7, 67.

34 *Madras* (Prospectus), 18, 24.

35 RPI (Madras) 1854–5, 9; 1859–60, 83. By 1856–7, the professor of fine art had introduced a detailed syllabus that was flourishing by 1859. On the importance of casts in teaching, Frayling, *Royal College*, 22.

36 RPI (Madras) 1856–7, 69; 1859–60, 86.

37 RPI (Madras) 1859–60, 88; 1873–4, 86–8.

38 RPI (Bombay) 1855–6, 132; 1856–7, 97–8. (And yet Jijibhai wanted to improve industrial arts, rather than create 'a school of imaginative painters and sculptors'.) RPI, 1857–8, 99–101. Payton worked as a painter in the Gallery of Fine Art of James M. Leigh of 79, Newman Street, London. By 1857, Terry had begun charging students of engraving Re 1 per month (RPI, 1857–8, 99). Macdonald, *History*, 74, 176.

39 J. Crowe, *Reminiscences of Thirty Years of My Life*, London, 1895, 23. Venturi, *History*, 233–4. On Delaroche's studio, Milner, *Studios*. I am indebted to Jaynie Anderson for reference to Crowe.

40 Crowe, *Reminiscences*, 229–38, 261, 87.

41 RPI (Bombay) 1857–8, 103. Crowe, *Reminiscences*, 253.

42 RPI (Bombay) 1857–8, 102–3.

43 J. H. Rivett-Karnac, *Many Memories of Life in India*, London, 1910, 225–6. T. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*, London, 1989, 94 and *passim*; P. Davies, *Splendours of the Raj*, London, 1987.

44 R. Kipling, *Kim*, London (1956 edn), 1.

45 W. Gaunt, *John Griffiths (1837–1918)*, London, 1980. J. Griffiths, *The Paintings in the Buddhist Cave Temples of Ajanta*, 2 vols, London, 1896–7.

46 RPI (Bombay) 1857–8, 99; 1858–9, 394; 1859–60, 84; 1868–9, 55, 122–3.

47 RPI (Bombay) 1857–58, 99. This was Robert Herman, the Deputy Headmaster, who produced a set of outlines of the human figure for the Department of Practical Art (Macdonald, *History*, 189); Frayling, *Royal College*, 51–2 on his unpopularity among students for bossiness.

48 Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 2–3. The drawings of early students are preserved in the school.

49 *Story of J. J.*, 35. *Journal of Indian art and Industry*, 2 Oct. 1888, 17–24 on Sind pottery.

50 *Story of J. J.*, 45. In Britain these schools were becoming 'cheap drawing schools for the benefit of the middle and even upper classes', so ran the complaint (Frayling, *Royal College*, 26).

51 General Report of Public Instruction (Bengal) 1862–3, 25.

52 RPI (Bengal) 1865–6, 531 ff.; 536; 1865–6, 532–5. On Redgrave's course, Frayling, *Royal College*, 41.

53 RPI (Bengal) 1872–3, 704.

54 RPI (Bengal) 1885–6, 77.

55 On the importance of geometrical drawing, see below, ch. 6. Owen Jones (*The Grammar of Ornament*, London, 1856, Pl. XCVII) held that the basis of all form was geometry. The ideal of geometrical symmetry of Cole, Jones and Redgrave is caricatured today as mechanical. Yet, if authoritarianism was their failing, their attacks on illusionist design led the way to modern movements and the appreciation of non-European art.

56 *Shilpa Pushpānjali* (1886); *Bālak* (1885); Macdonald, *History*, 169; and 122 on nineteenth-century scientific approach to art instruction, especially in drawing books, 'books of diagrams for copying which reduced drawing to its primary elements, starting with a perpendicular line, then continuing with horizontal lines, inclined lines, curved lines, then forms connected with these essential lines [the square, the triangle and the cube]', works known to *Shilpa Pushpānjali*.

57 RPI (Bengal) 1886–7, 77; Bagal, 'History', 15–16; on Cole, Macdonald, *History*, 159–74.

58 RPI (Bengal) 1865–6, 532; art books for the library, 1867–8, 612; 1887–8, 77. F. Haskell and N. Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, London, 1981, 221. RPI (Bombay) 1862–3, 34; *Story of J. J.*, 35. The institution of national competition was due to Redgrave (Macdonald, *History*, 192 ff.).

59 Macdonald, *History*, 127. RPI (Madras) 1881–2, 157 on gallery and library.

60 V. N. Barve, *A Brief Guide to Dr Bhau daji Lad Museum*, Bombay, 1975, 25–8.

61 RPI (Bengal) 1875–6, 83; 1877–8, 72. Also ch. 2, pp. 77–9.

62 *Catalogue of the Art Collection in the Sir J. J. School of Art*, Bombay, 1885 (unpaginated).

63 *Papers Relating to the Maintenance of Schools of Art in India as State Institutions, 1893–6*, Calcutta, 1898, 1–3. On the Calcutta exhibition, see below, pp. 77. On aims of the journal, *Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, 1, 1886, preface, which refers to government resolution of 14.3.1883 aiming to give local and foreign publicity to the revival of Indian arts. On Ram Singh's decoration of Osborne, letters of Sir Henry Ponsonby to Kipling, 20.4.1890–25.2.1892 (John Lockwood Kipling papers, University of Sussex and National Trust).

64 *The Athenaeum*, 2568, 13 Jan. 1877, 57.

65 M. Tarapor, 'John Lockwood Kipling and British Art Education in India'; E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order*, London, 1979, 34.

66 Secretary of State No. 128 (Education), 9.11.1893 in *Papers on Art Schools*, 1.

67 Quoted in *Journal of Indian Art . . .*, 15 July 1912, 51. On oriental art and the concept of the orient, see chs 7 and 8, below.

68 *Papers*, 2. On student perseverance and the teaching of imitative habits,

Macdonald, *History*, 227; but we must not forget here Ruskin's notion of the sacred study of nature's minutiae.

69 C. L. Burns, 'The Function of Schools of Art in India', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 2952, 57, 1909, 629–41, argued that Indian craftsmen's small-scale work could not survive foreign competition, so the future lay in modernising their work methods. Birdwood and Havell contradicted Burns. Other commentators included art teachers, Chatterton, Chisholm and Hendley. Havell held his fire by only attacking the PWD but significantly he had brought some sculptures to prove that these arts were thriving in India. His own lecture, 'Art Administration in India,' took place on Thursday 13 January 1910. (*JRSA*, 2985, 58, 1910, 273–89).

70 *Madras* (Prospectus), 25.

71 RPI (Bombay) 1857–8, 103.

72 RPI (Bombay) 1869–70, 123; 1873–4, 52 ff. This was James Fergusson, the authority on Indian architecture (see ch. 6, pp. 226–7).

73 RPI (Bengal) 1865–6, 539–40.

74 Gombrich, *Sense of Order*, 278–81; Pevsner, *Studies in Art . . .*, I, on the importance of decoration for Victorians; G. Birdwood, *The Industrial Arts of India*, London, 1880.

75 Birdwood, *Industrial Arts*, 125–6. At the 1910 Society of Arts meeting Birdwood elaborated as to why fine arts did not exist in India. The Hindu gods expressed no noble universal ideas, Hindu temples were not comparable with spiritual Gothic cathedrals (*JRSA*, 2985, 58, 1910, 286).

76 Chatterton at the Royal Society of Arts meeting (*JRSA*, 2952, 57, 1909, 649).

77 C. Wood, *Olympian Dreamers*, London, 1983, 207.

78 V. C. Prinsep, *Imperial India*, London, 1879, 47–8.

79 R. Parker and R. Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, London, 1981, 51. Victorian classification of culture owed to prevailing evolutionary doctrines (J. Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, Cambridge, 1970).

80 *Papers on Art Schools*, 15. As Edward Said brought to our attention, the word 'oriental' is a western construct, which ignores individual Asian cultures. The term oriental art here is somewhat meaningless in the sense that Indian art is no closer to Middle Eastern art, for instance, than to European. What it really says here is that it is unlike western naturalist art.

81 Sarkar, *Shilpi Saptak*, 17; also below, ch. 6.

82 RPI (Bengal) 1870–1, 385. Bagal, 'History', 8.

83 RPI (Bombay) 1869–70, 123. *Journal of Indian Art*, 5, 1894, 63 on students' winter visit to Rani Sipri Mosque in Ahmedabad.

84 J. Griffiths, *Reports on the Work of Copying the Paintings in the Caves of Ajunta*, London, 1872–85, 25. On the use of Ajanta motifs in Bombay art school pottery, S. Stronge, 'Wonderland', *Ceramics*, 5, August 1987, 48–53. Terry's pottery was very popular for a short while (on Terry, p. 43 above).

85 Mitter, *Monsters*, 235 on Rám Ráz. Griffiths, *Reports*, 1.

86 On Havell's new weapon to nationalists, see below, ch. 7.

87 RPI (Madras) 1883–4, 115; 1880–1, 204. *Madras* (Prospectus), 21.

88 Burns, 'Function of Art Schools', *JRSA*, 2952, 629.

89 Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 2. On charges for Terry's class, see note 39.

90 RPI (Bengal) 1862–3, 24; 1872–73, 704; 1875–6, 82. 'Promotion of Industrial

Arts' (Art Committee, Calcutta, December, 1883) in *Papers on Art Schools*, 9.

91 See below, ch. 3.

92 *JRSA*, 2985, 58, 1910, 289. For all his condescension about Indian students, Chisholm himself describes the scene as Venus being showered with gold by Jupiter!

93 Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 1.

94 Havell, *JRSA*, 2985, 58, 1910, 275.

95 J. P. Ganguly, 'Early Reminiscences', *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, 8, Pts. 1 & 2, May–Oct. 1942 (Abanindra Number), 16.

96 Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 14. Handing him the copy Griffiths said, 'Read it carefully, so you will get inspiration and add to your knowledge'. Dhurandhar cites examples of Griffiths' kindness. The art teachers kept in touch even after they retired to Britain, sending gifts and congratulatory letters on his successes. Even Cecil Burns, who did not get on with him when he was Principal, wrote warmly (letters in memoir). Similarly Mhatre received letters from his teachers, including Griffiths' on 16.12.1903.

97 RPI (Bombay) 1869–70, 124–5.

98 Griffiths, *Report*, 6.

99 Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 19.

100 Sarkar, *Shilpi Saptak*, 18–28.

101 RPI (Bengal) 1865–6, 536–7.

102 RPI (Bengal) 1869–70, 387.

103 RPI (Bombay) 1867–8, 51.

104 RPI (Bombay) 1872–3, 53.

105 RPI (Bengal) 1871–2, 48, quoting *The Saturday Review* of 21.9.1872.

106 RPI (Bengal) 1871–2, 48.

107 RPI (Bengal) 1865–6, 537 and 538.

108 Bagal, 'History', 4.

3. SALON ARTISTS AND THE RISE OF THE INDIAN PUBLIC

1 Venniyoor, *Ravi Varma*, 96. On olympians, Wood, *Olympian Dreamers*; Harding, J. *Artistes Pompiers*, London, 1979.

2 On Kundanal, R. V. Vashistha, *Mewād ki Citrānkan Paramparā*, Jaipur, 1984. See above, ch. 1 on the early artists, Raghunath and Naidu; on Gangadhar Dey, K. Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 48.

3 Raja Raja Varma Diary, 1.2.1901; 11.7.1901.

4 E. G. Holt, *The Triumph of Art for the Public, 1785–1848*, Princeton, 1983, 1–10. F. Haskell, 'Spreading News', on the impact of art exhibitions on taste, though with museums, accessibility was not enough; exhibitions often only helped sustain educated taste (*Rediscoveries in Art*, New York, 1976, 96–100).

5 J-L. David, 'The Painting of the Sabines', in E. G. Holt, *From the Classicists to the Impressionists*, New York, 1966, 5. H. Honour, *Neoclassicism*, London, 1968, 87–9.

6 J. Barrell, *Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt*, New Haven, 1986, 2.

7 For the proceedings of the Society For the Acquisition of General

Knowledge in Calcutta set up on 12.3.1838, G. Chattopadhyaya, *Awakening in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1965, lxv–lxvii: 'Selection of Discourses Delivered at the Meetings of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge'. Smith on The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (see above, ch. 2, note 1). On Victorian cultural associations, J. Wolff and C. Arstoff, *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth Century Middle Class*, Manchester, 1987.

8 Seal, *Emergence*, 194.

9 For the list of early prize winners, B. Sadwelkar, *Story of a Hundred Years: The Bombay Art Society 1888–1988*, Bombay, 1989. *Times of India*, 11.2.92; 21.2.96, 24.3.98 for some dates of shows in Bombay. On the first art exhibition, personal communication by K. Sarkar and his article, 'Kalkātār Pratham Chitra Pradarshani', *Desh*, Yr 49, No. 36, 10 July 1982, 85–92.

10 Barrell, *Political Theory*, 64; on newspapers and the growth of Indian public opinion, U. Das Gupta, *Rise of an Indian Public: Impact of Official Policy 1870–80*, Calcutta, 1977.

11 E. J. Buck, *Simla Past and Present*, Bombay, 1925, 138. M. Bence-Jones, *Palaces of the Raj*, London, 1973, 134.

12 On Simla, Bence-Jones, *Palaces*, 145. Buck, *Simla*, 135–8.

13 R. Temple, *The Story of My Life*, I, London, 1896, 94. Buck, *Simla*, 135–7; Temple, *Story*, II, 11 for an account of Baigree's death.

14 *The Indian Charivari*, 15.11.1872, 15 on Simla.

15 Buck, *Simla*, 136. It is possible to interpret Kipling as voicing Anglo–Indian resentment at the Ilbert Bill (P. Spear, *A History of India*, II, London, 1975, 169–70 on the issue). See also ch. 6.

16 Buck, *Simla*, 137 ff.

17 Buck, *Simla*, 138. On professional artists, especially in BAS, *Times of India*, 11.2.92, 21.2.96 and 24.3.98.

18 Buck, *Simla*, 136. Temple, *Story*, I, 195; Temple, *Story*, I, 8 on interest in watercolour sketches kindled by his father (later he took up oils). The two volumes are on his sketching activities in India. *The Indian Charivari*, 8.1.75, 12. All art society exhibitions had a special section for native art.

19 *Catalogue of the Third Native Fine and Industrial Art Exhibition at 'Ravenswood'*, Simla, 1881. Tantalisingly this third catalogue remains the only evidence of these shows so far.

20 Buck, *Simla*, 136.

21 F. M. [pseud.], *The Indo European Art Amateur: An enquiry into the encouragement of the fine arts in India, given rise to by the reputed failure of the Simla fine arts exhibition of 1884*, Calcutta, 1885. Reference to critics as a species of male hints at her gender.

22 Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 44. On the assertion of cultural difference during the nationalist period, see ch. 7.

23 Spear, *History*, on the distinction between covenanted and lower posts in Raj bureaucracy, less acute in the eighteenth century. Cornwallis, the first Governor-General to introduce it, wrote, 'Every native of India is corrupt' (Spear, *History*, 97). The word 'native' came to denote cultural inferiority.

24 Memorandum to Education Dept. by E. Thurston, dated 7 July 1903, Reports No. 27 B, p. 4 (source: the Director Sri Harinarayana). Thurston was the first curator of the Government Museum, Madras (Journal of Royal

Society of Arts, 2942, 57, 9 Apr. 1909).

25 Administrative Report of the Government Museum, Madras, 1901–2, quoted in *Centenary Volume and Guide* (Harinarayana).

26 Information on Poona based on Nalini Bhagwat's thesis on Bombay artists, 'Development of Contemporary Art in Western India', PhD dissertation, University of Baroda, I, 1983, 46 ff. On Bombay Art Society, note 8 above, *The Bombay Art Society Memorandum of Aims and Objects with Rules and Regulations; Bombay Art Society Diamond Jubilee Souvenir: 1888–1948*. On the founding of BAS, *The Gazetteer of the Bombay City and Island*, III, Bombay, 1910, 220.

27 *Times of India*, 19.2.1889.

28 *Times of India*, 21.2.89; 25.2.89. B. Denvir, *The Early Nineteenth Century*, London, 1984, 64 on conversazioni.

29 *Times of India* 11.2.92 (on the very large number of Englishwomen and on purdah); 12.2.94; 14.2.96 (Mrs Ulith). Information from Ms Bhagwat on the women artists, Wadia and Kama (note 26 above).

30 *Times of India*, 24.3.98.

31 *Times of India*, 12.2.94.

32 *Times of India*, 18.2.96.

33 *Times of India*, 18.2.96, 21.2.96, 9.2.92, 12.2.94, 24.3.98, 23.3.1904. Felici, Roman sculptor and painter, court artist of Sayaji Rao III (1892–5), then partly settled in Venice. Works include bronze Tanjore Dancer at Baroda and ones in Rome and Buenos Aires (Goetz, *Fatesingh Museum*, 21–2). On Havell see below, ch. 8.

34 Bagal, *Centenary* (see above, ch. 2, note 11), 2. On Marble Palace, see above, ch. 1; on Mallik, Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 81.

35 Bagal, *Centenary*, 9. *The Indian Charivari*, 3.10.73, 295.

36 *Fine Arts Exhibition Seventh Year* (catalogue), held in the Indian Museum New Building, Calcutta, December 1874; Bagal, *Centenary*, 9. On the 1874 exhibition I prefer to use the dates of exhibitions, rather than sequential numbers used by Sarkar and Bagal. The 1874 exhibition catalogue consulted by me describes itself as the seventh year. But if 1871 is the first year, it does not follow that 1874 is the seventh year! The confusion is difficult to resolve without further evidence. On Stuart, Gowing, *A History of Art*, II, 656.

37 *The Englishman*, quoting Temple in *The Indian Charivari*, 10. Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 97. James Peyton, the art teacher, see above p. 38.

38 *The Indian Charivari*, 8.1.75, 6.

39 Sarkar, *Bharater*, 40, 48, 145; Bagal, *Centenary*, 10–11. On Bamapada, *Prabāsi*, 7.3.1314 (1908), 169. Sarkar, 'Precursors of Art Exhibitions', *The Sunday Statesman*, 22.12.1968.

40 Bagal, *Centenary*, 17–20.

41 Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 48; A. Bagchi, *Annadā Jibani*, Calcutta, 1897, 65.

42 *Official Report, Calcutta International Exhibition (1883–84)*, I, Calcutta, 1885, 104 ff.

43 *Official Report*, I, 116.

44 *Official Report*, I, 438; II, 501, 530 (on Bombay art school). On Poona Chitrashala Press and CAS, see below, ch. 4.

45 Bagal, *Centenary*, 12.

46 On the Barings, Northbrook's family, P. Ziegler, *The Sixth Great Power:*

Barings 1762–1929, London, 1988 and B. Mallet, *Thomas George Earl of Northbrook*, London, 1908, 141, on Thomas Baring, the great collector of pictures and art objects and on the family home at Stratton.

47 *Catalogue . . . of Tagore*, iii.

48 R. Chatterjee, *The Kāyastha Samāchār*, Allahabad, Oct.–Nov. 1899, in *Mhatre Testimonials* (a list of testimonials to the sculptor compiled by the family), 22–3. Bagchi, *Annadā Jibani*, 49.

49 Barrell, *Political Theory*, 79; Poussin's view, 41: 'elle doit estre prise noble, qui n'aye reçeu aucune qualité de l'ouvrier'.

50 RPI (Bengal) 1885–6, 77.

51 R. Graves, 'Genius', *Playboy*, December, 1969, 126; P. Murray, ed., *Genius: The History of an Idea*, Oxford, 1989 on the connection between madness and inspiration and on artistic genius versus craftsmanship, a reflection of social changes (especially introduction, 9–31 and N. Kessel, 196–212).

52 The conflict between artistic progress seen as a problem-solving activity and the role of ideas in a work of art is as old as Vasari (E. H. Gombrich, *Norm and Form*, London, 1966, 1–10 and 81–98).

53 On nationalist art, see below, Part II.

54 Mukharjea, see ch. 1, note 40. RPI, Bengal, 1885–6, 77. Rs 100–300 was roughly equivalent to £7–£21. *Journal of Indian Art*, I, 69, gives slightly higher fees for art-school-trained portraitists (between Rs. 100–500). The notion of the Platonic 'idea' in E. Panofsky, *Idea: Ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte der Alteren Kunsttheorie*, Berlin, 1960.

55 S. Ghosh, *Chhabi Tolā*, Calcutta, 1988, 306. This advertisement indicates that Gangadhar Dey undertook photography and restoration work as well (see above, ch. 1, p. 20).

56 J. M. Gutman, *Through Indian Eyes*, New York, 1982, ch. 5.

57 Source: Foy Nissen.

58 Prinsep, *Imperial India*, 64–6. H. D. Darukhanawala, *Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil*, I, Bombay, 1939, 188–9.

59 Darukhanawalla, *Parsi Lustre*, I, 189.

60 *Calcutta International Exhibition*, II, 530. Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 145. *Times of India*, 19.2.1889; 25.2.1889.

61 *Times of India*, 4.2.1892; 18.2.1896; 24.3.1898. Darukhanawala, *Parsi Lustre*, I, 189. It is not clear when *The Parsee Girl* was exhibited.

62 Darukhanawala, *Parsi Lustre*, I, 190–2. *Prabāsi*, 2, No. 5, 1309–10, 288.

63 *The Evening Standard*, 19.10.1911; *The Graphic*, 28.10.1911, 634.

64 *The Globe*, 26.10.1911.

65 Darukhanawalla, *Parsi Lustre*, I, 191 (source: Nalini Bhagwat). Sir J. Linton was President of R.I.W.C.

66 B. Sadwelkar, 'Chitrakār Abalal Rahimān' (author's collection), 11–12. The teacher from whom Abalal took Persian lessons was D. B. Parasnis (see ch. 2, note 4).

67 Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 19. RPI (Bombay) 1885–6, 32–3; 1887–8, 35.

68 Sadwelkar, 'Abalal', 14.

69 Sadwelkar, 'Abalal', 14–15. Information about this period comes from the artist's devoted companion, D. M. Shinde.

70 Sadwelkar, 'Abalal', 17.

71 Sadwelkar, 'Abalal', 17.

72 Sadwelkar, 'Abalal', 21. Also Sadwelkar, 'Diari til pane', *Mouj* (Special Diwali Issue) 1967, 64 ff., who discovered and compiled it. Diary, 16–17. Sadwelkar, 'Abalal', 18, 19 on another friend, Ghorpade.

73 Diary, 70.

74 G. Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1973, 113; Seal, *Emergence*, 194 (like the Kayasthas of north India, Prabhus were one of the first communities to organise into an association, also confirmed by Dhurandhar).

75 Dhurandhar, *Forty Years*, 13, 24.

76 Dhurandhar, *Forty Years*, 20 ff., 22.

77 Griffiths, 'The Glass and Copper Wares of the Bombay Presidency', in *Journal of Indian Art*, 7, Nos. 54–60, 1897, 16.

78 Dhurandhar was one of the most prolific suppliers to firms specialising in printed pictures, postcards, posters and oleographs. Some sixty postcard designs by him were printed in Germany (source: Nimai Chatterjee, who has a complete collection, suggests that Dhurandhar was the first Indian to design postcards).

79 Dhurandhar's Maratha watercolour series in Kolhapur Museum. O. Rothfeld, *Women of India*, London, 1924; C. A. Kincaid (*Deccan Nursery Tales*, London, 1914), thanks him for the pictures: 'the most beautiful things I have ever seen' (letter, 26.2.1914; Dhurandhar). Dhurandhar's murals for New Delhi will be discussed in my forthcoming work.

80 *BAS Diamond Jubilee*; Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 27. The work was printed in *Prabāsi*, Yr. 3, 2, 1903 and in W. E. Gladstone Solomon's *The Charm of Indian Art*, Bombay, 1921, as epitomising India. His prizes included the Madras Fine Arts (1904 and 1909), The Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition (1904), Congress Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, Kolhapur (1905), Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition, Pandharpur (1907), Art and Industrial Exhibition, Jalgaon (1919) and Indian Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition (Varanasi).

81 A number of volumes are preserved by his daughter, Miss Ambika Dhurandhar, herself an artist, as well as many sketches from the nude. His collections included F. R. Yerbury, *The Human Form*, 1924; *The Living Model*; *Le Nu au Salon. L'Études académiques, recueil des documents humains illustré d'après nature*, VI (550 studies, Librairie d'Art technique, Paris).

82 Personal communication from his daughter-in-law Carmen Trindade. On the government policy of encouraging Christian minority, see above, ch. 2. Gutman, *Indian Eyes*, 103 ff. on painted photographs.

83 Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 35. Trindade's house, at present inhabited by Carmen, contains a large number of the artist's paintings.

84 S. B. Sirgaonkar, *Artist A. H. Muller and his Art*, Bombay, 1975, 39–41.

85 Sirgaonkar, *Muller*, 43.

86 Sirgaonkar, *Muller*, 43–4.

87 Sirgaonkar, *Muller*, 44–50. Muller's Bikaner paintings are in *Ganga Golden Jubilee Volume* (Bikaner, 1985).

88 M. Chamot *et al.*, *Tate Gallery Catalogues, The Modern British Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture*, I (Artists A–L), London, 1964, 199–200. Fyzee Rahamin was from the Bene Israel community, who had settled in Maharastra for centuries, speaking Marathi and the women wearing saris.

The community felt that in modern times it had remained behind Parsis and Hindus (H. S. Kehimkar, *The History of the Bene Israel of India*, Tel Aviv, 1937, 90–106). Seven portraits include the Gaekwad family and an Englishwoman, Mrs Meade, the largest number of portraits beside those of Varma (note from Fatesingh Gallery, Baroda). On Siodia, see his daughter's biography (W. G. Solomon, *Paintings of Cumi Dallas*, Bombay, 1965, x). I have not been able to find out much about the background of this early salon painter, apart from a portrait at The Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

89 Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 32. The painting, *Amal i-Faizi Rahamin* (Tate Gallery no. 4095, watercolour) presented by Victor Sassoon in 1925. Dated c. 1913, exhibited in one-man shows in London, it was reproduced in *Music of India* by Atiya Begum and Rahamin. *Rajput Sardar*, 1925 (Tate No. 4096, watercolour), identified by his wife in 1960 as Maharawal Uday Rana of Udaipur. Rahamin spent his last years in Pakistan (source: Rashid Araeen).

90 Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 20. On Mhatre, *Prabāsi*, Yr. 1. 4, Srāvan, 1308 (1901), 135; Sadwelkar, 'Ganpatrao Ane Tyancho Shilpakala', *Granthāli*, Mar. 1977, 37.

91 Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil*, 20.

92 *Times of India*, 13.2.1896.

93 Ravi Varma's praise dated 18.2.1896 (*Mhatre Testimonials*, note 48 above). Mhatre once visited the Varmas (RRV, 1903).

94 Birdwood's letter reproduced from *Bombay Gazette* in *Journal of Indian Art . . .*, 7, 61–9, 1900, 1.

95 Birdwood's letter, in *Journal of Indian Art . . .*, 7, 61–9, 1900, 1.

96 Birdwood's letter in *Journal of Indian Art . . .*, 2.

97 Letter of Greenwood, 5.12.96, *Bombay Gazette*, 10–11 (*Mhatre Test.*).

98 Greenwood, 5.12.96 (*Mhatre Test.* 11).

99 Greenwood, 5.12.96 (*Mhatre Test.* 11).

100 Birdwood, *Bombay Gazette*, 18.12.96 (*Mhatre Test.* 13).

101 Mhatre to Birdwood in *JIAI*, 8, 2, 1900, 5.

102 R. F. Chisholm to Birdwood, *JIAI*, 8, 2, 4. On Chisholm see above, ch. 2, p. 38 and below, ch. 5, p. 187.

103 *Indian Magazine and Review*, December 1899 (*Mhatre Test.*), 18–19.

104 *Times of India*, 13.2.1896. Testimonials of Greenwood (12.10.96) and DeClosay who signs as his friend (28.9.1896) in *Mhatre Test.*, 2.

105 *Magazine of Art*, April 1897, 343–4.

106 Secretary to Governor to Greenwood, 2.7.1896. Memo. of Education Dept Bombay, No. 955 of 17.7.1899. Letter of DPI, Bombay, No. 2078 of 3.7.1899 quoting Resolution No. 3850 of 14.7.1898. Govt. of India, Home Dept (Education) No. 383 of 7.8.1899.

107 *Times of India*, 21.1.1899.

108 *The Tribune* (Lahore), 31.5.1900. 'An Earnest Appeal on Behalf of a Promising Indian Artist', *Prabāsi*, 1, No. 5, 1308 (1901).

109 A. Quantin, *L'Exposition du siècle*, Paris, 1900, 201: 'une statue symbolique representait Saraswatee, accompagnant sur une guitare, sans doûte quelque nouveau cantique imperialiste de Rudiard Kipling. L'indienne avait la tête casquée de la couronne anglaise, et son poids la laissait courbée, sans lui parmettre de redresser sa taille gracieuse'.

110 Letter of H. Jekyll (Secretary, British Royal Commission) from Paris, dated

28.8.1900. Awards were numerous, 2827 first prizes, 8166 gold medals, 12,244 silver, 11,615 bronze and 7,938 honourable mentions: P. Jullian, *The Triumph of Art Nouveau: Paris Exhibition 1900*, London, 1974, 206.

111 *Times of India*, 14.1.1901.

112 *Indian Spectator*, 20.1.1901.

113 *Magazine of Art*, October 1901, 572; Jullian, *Triumph*, 192–3, 206.

114 G. Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi 1903*, Calcutta, 1904, v.

115 *Times of India*, 8.1.1910. 8.4.1913 (Ranade. See ch. 5, p. 191, for Varma's portrait of Ranade.)

116 Bagchi, *Annadā Jibani*, 22.

117 *Shilpa Pushpānjali*, 2, 1885, 153.

118 Bagal, 'Hist. of Govt. College' (ch. 2, note 11, above), 10.

119 Bagal, 'Hist.', 10.

120 Bagchi, *Annadā Jibani*, 49–51; Bagal, 'Hist.', 9, 13–15.

121 See below, pp. 175–8.

122 G. M. Das, 'Prabāsi Bāngālir Kathā', *Prabāsi*, Yr.7, 3, Asadh 1314 (1907), 169–76.

123 J. P. Ganguly, 'Reminiscences', *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* 1942, 18.

124 Bagchi, *Annadā Jibani*, 47. *Bhārati*, Yr. 36, 7, 1319 (1912), 718.

125 Ganguly, 'Reminiscences', 20.

126 *The Pioneer* quoted in *Prabāsi*, Yr. 2, 5, 1309–10 (1902–3), 188. Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 170.

127 *Times of India*, 22.3.04.

128 *Times of India*, 8.3.07.

129 *Times of India*, 8.3.07. The other painter who found approval as truly indigenous was Balasaheb Panth Pratinidhi, ruler of Aundh (see above, ch. 1, p. 23), but his work was not taken seriously by critics.

130 *Prabāsi*, Yr. 11, 5, 1309–10 (1903), 188 and *The Studio*, vol. 27, 15 Oct. 1902, No. 115, 25 ff.

131 *Bhārati*, Yr. 33, 3, Āsād, 1316 (1909), frontispiece; R. Tagore, 'Kādambari Chitra', *Pradip*, Magh, 1306, quoted in Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 170. *Bhārati*, Yr. 33, 7, Kārtik, 1316 (frontispiece); Yr. 35, 7, Kārtik, 1318 (1911) (frontispiece).

132 *Bhārati*, Yr. 36, 7, 1319 (1912), 722–32.

133 *Bhārati*, Yr. 36, 7, 1319 (1912), 718. Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 170.

134 Ganguly, *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, 21 (also ch. 8); *Sāhitya*, Yr. 21, 12, 1317, 752; Yr. 22, 10. 1318, 801; 1, 1323, 86 (also ch. 9).

135 Bagchi, *Annadā Jibani*, 65.

136 Sarkar, 'Rohini Nāg', 58–61. Sarkar, 'Rohini Kānta Nāg', *Baromāsh*, August 1978, 58. Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 197.

137 Bagal, Calcutta, 20.

138 Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 61.

139 Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 197–9. The information supplemented by interview with the artist, Binode Bihari Mukhopadhaya, shortly before his death, and H. Ghosh, 'Sashi Kumar Hesh', *Sundaram*, Yr. 3, No. 1, Āsvin, 1365, 99.

140 *The Times*, 7.11. 1899, report of meeting of the Indian National Association at the Imperial Institute the previous evening.

141 *Indian Magazine and Review*, December 1899 (*Mhatre Test.*). D. K. Rai, *Aurobindo Prasanga*, Chandanagore, 1923, 74.

142 On Aurobindo's years in England, L. A. Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist*

Movement, 1876–1940, New York, 1974. Traumatic experience at Clifton College, an English public school, turned Aurobindo and his brother Barindra into revolutionaries and implicated them in the Manicktola Bomb Case in 1908. E. Hobsbawm on Aurobindo's *Bhawani Mandir* (1905), a seminal tract for Indian revolutionaries: 'the Bengali Terrorist movement, which owed little if any of its ritual to West European tradition . . . drew its inspiration from Hindu religion, stressing the cult of the goddess Kali . . .' (*Primitive Rebels*, Manchester, 1959, 167–8).

143 Rai, *Aurobindo*, 27 ff. and 74 ff. On Sayaji Rao, D. Hardiman, 'Baroda: The Structure of a Progressive State', in R. Jeffrey, *People, Princes and Paramount Power*, Delhi, 1978, 113–26.

144 Rai, *Aurobindo*, 74 ff.

145 Rai, *Aurobindo*, 79. On Fanindra Bose, see below, pp. 117–8.

146 Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 198. The sitters were Jagadish Bose, the educationist Pandit Shibnath Sastri, the Tagores, Congress leaders, W. C. Bonerjee, Dinshaw Wacha and Allan Octavian Hume, and high officials, Lord Reay, Sir William Wedderburn and Sir William Hunter.

147 Source: Binode Bihari Mukhopadhaya. On Mukul Dey's comment, P. Mandal, *Bhārat Shilpi Nandalāl*, II, 1984, Calcutta, 143. Soon Atul Bose was to face similar problems of making a living.

148 P. Atarthi, 'Ekti Bāngāli Bhāskar', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 22, 4, Srāban, 1329 (1922), reprinted in *Chatuskon*, Āshvin, 1380 (1973), 757–8. On Mercié and Rodin, P. Fusco and H. W. Janson, *The Romantics to Rodin*, Los Angeles, 1980, 303–5; 326 ff.

149 B. Read, *Victorian Sculpture*, London, 308.

150 B. Read, *Victorian Sculpture*, 308. *Royal Academy Exhibitors: 1905–70*, I, Wakefield, 1973, 168 ff. J. Johnson and A. Creutzner, *The Dictionary of British Artists (1840–1940)*, Woodbridge, 1986, 66. Also showed at the Royal Scottish Academy and the Royal Society of Arts (Singh, note 152 below). For information on his decoration of St John's Kirk (Perth) I am grateful to its Minister, Rev. David Ogston.

151 *The Scotsman*, 19.3.1925, 7. On Schotz, *Royal Academy Exhibitions*, V, London, 1981, 458.

152 St N. Singh, 'A Bengali Sculptor Trained in Europe: The Art of Fanindranath Bose', *The Graphic*, Saturday 1 May 1920, 686. Singh said that his work was more truly oriental than Epstein's but he avoided the mannerisms of the Bengal School, a remark that led to the famous debate. Bose died at Peebles on 1 August 1926 (*The Times* of 7.8.26).

4. THE POWER OF THE PRINTED IMAGE

1 J. C. Bagal, *Rāmānanda Chattopadhaya*, Calcutta, 1371 (1964), 115. On the Congress and the Bengal Renaissance, S. Sarkar, *Notes on the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1985 edn. A. Gupta, *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1958.

2 Bagal, *Rāmānanda*; Sarkar, *Notes*; Gupta, *Studies*.

3 Bagal, *Rāmānanda*, 73.

4 See ch. 6. Bagal, *Rāmānanda*, 66.

5 *Prabasi*, Yr. 1, 1, Baisakh, 1308 (1901); *Modern Review*, Part 1, Jan. 1907.
6 *Shilpa Pushpānjali*, 1885; on *Balak*, see above, ch. 1; on Balendranath, see above, ch. 1 and below, ch. 6.
7 Quoted in S. Ghosh, *Kārigari Kalpanā o Bāngāli Udyog*, Calcutta, 1988, 158; also his *Chhabi Tola*, on Upendrakishore and photography. A. Robinson, 'Selected Letters of Sukumar Ray', *South Asia Research*, 7, 2, Nov. 1987, 171. On his connection with Hesh and Bose, see above, ch. 3. On Bose, an early non-European Fellow of the Royal Society, P. Geddes, *The Life and Work of Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose*, London, 1920. A pioneer on electrical radiation, his brilliant work won accolades from leading scientists but his later work on plant life aroused controversy. Bose was a leading campaigner for women's education. A most fascinating scrapbook was kept by a member of the group, Dr Dwijen Maitra, a much-travelled man whose acquaintances ranged from the Japanese poet Yone Noguchi to the German conductor Weingartner.
8 Ghosh, *Kārigari*.
9 Ghosh, *Kārigari*, 81.
10 *Prabāsi*, Yr. 3, 2, 1310, 63; for Ravi Varma biography, see below, ch. 5, note 4; Dhurandhar in *Prabāsi*, Yr. 2, 9, 1309–10, 312; 3.2, 1310; 6.6, 1313, 328; Yr. 7, 6, 1314 (frontispiece) and *passim*.
11 *Bhārati*, Yr. 23, 1, 1316, frontispiece.
12 *Sāhitya*, Yr. 4, 1300; Yr. 11, 1307, 1137.
13 *Shilpa o Sāhitya*, 8, 1315.
14 *Mānasi o Marmabāni*, Yrs 1–10 (1314–24/5); *Bhārat Barsha*, Yr. 1, 1, Āsad-Agrahayan, 1320 (1913). The first book printed by offset litho process was the children's book, *Lāl Kālo* by the Freudian psychologist Girindra Sekhar Bose, brother of Rajsekhar Bose, and illustrated by Jatin Sen (see below, p. 167–9).
15 R. Tagore, *Rabindra Rachanābali* (Centenary Edn), X, Calcutta, 1961, 208.
16 *Shilpa o Sāhitya*, Yr. 7, 1, Āswin, 1314, 23. Bagal, *Rāmānanda*, 107.
17 I am indebted to Rawal's son for information and material on *Kumār* and *Vasmi Sadi* (see also ch. 8).
18 See *Māsik Basumati*, Yr. 3, Pt. 1, 5, 1331, 617; Yr. 3, Pt. 1, 6, 774; Yr. 4, Pt. 2, 1, Kārtik, 1332, 105; Yr. 4, Pt. 2, 2, 1332, 137; Pt. 2, 2, 1341, 337; *Bhārat Barsha*, Yr. 12, Pt. 2, 1, 104; Yr. 15, Pt. 1, 1, 161; Yr. 15, Pt. 1, 2, 185 and others.
19 A. Khan and U. Chattopadhaya, eds, *Bidyāsāgar Smarak Grantha*, Medinipur, 1974, 2–40. At *Pāthsālās* (traditional schools) the *pandit* taught orally after an initiation ceremony for the child. The earliest spelling book was published by Raja Radhakanta Deb of Sobhabazar, followed by Tattvabodhini Sabha in 1844, M. Tarkalankar's *Sishu Sikshā* and B. N. G. Tarkalankar's *Sishu Bodh* among others. Vidyasagar's *Barna Parichay* set the standards of bhadralok culture (H. Bannerji, 'The Mirror of Class', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13 May 1989, 1046).
20 On the brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, R. M. Dorson in *Folktales of Germany*, Chicago, 1966, v–xxviii; *Hitopodeśa* and *Pañcatantra*, known as Bidpai's Tales in Islamic countries.
21 F. A. Steel, *Tales of the Punjab Told by the People* (notes by R. C. Temple), London, 1894, publisher's note and 271 (1973 edn). On British Folk-Lore

Society, R. M. Dorson in *Folktales of England*, Chicago, 1965, v.

22 L. Day, *Folk Tales of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1883, v. He was a professor at a college near Calcutta.

23 D. R. Majumdar, *Dakshinā Ranjan Rachanā Samagra*, I, Calcutta, 1388, on *Thakurmār Jhuli*; II, pp. *chh-jha*, on his career. He was encouraged by Dinesh Sen, the literary historian (see below, ch. 9). The woodcuts in Majumdar were by Priyagopal Das, based on author's sketches (Ghosh, *Kārigari*, 58). *Tuntunir Boi* (1918), tr. W. Radice, *The Stupid Tiger and Other Tales*, London, 1981.

24 G. Boas, *The Cult of Childhood*, London, 1966 (texts on the idealisation of children's innocence). P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, London, 1962, traces its inception in Europe with the 'invention of childhood' with its own dress, games and other needs, when children ceased to be mini-adults.

25 J. Huizinga, 'Homo Ludens'; see E. H. Gombrich, 'The High Seriousness of Play: Reflections on Homo Ludins by J. Huizinga', *Tributes*, London, 1984, 138–63.

26 On A. Tagore, see below, ch. 9 and on Rabindranath, P. Mitter, 'Rabindranath Tagore as Artist; A Legend in His Own Time?' in M. Lago, and R. Warwick, eds *Rabindranath Tagore; Perspectives in Time*, London, 1989, 111.

27 A. Tagore, *Kshirer Putul*, 1896; the illustrations to *Chandi* at Rabindra Bharati Society; Tagore, '*Dak-Ghar*', RR, 6, 419–40.

28 On children's literature in Bengal, S. Lal, 'Sandesh, The Child's World of Imagination', *India International Centre Quarterly*, 10, No. 4, 83, 435. On *Boy's Own Paper* as wholesome reading to counter penny dreadfuls, P. Dunae, 'Boy's Literature and the Idea of Empire', *Victorian Studies*, 24, Autumn 1980, 105–21; 'Penny Dreadfuls', *Victorian Studies*, 22, Winter 1979, 133–50.

29 Lal, 'Sandesh', 436 ff.; Robinson, 'Selected Letters', 227.

30 Satyajit Ray's *Sandesh* collection.

31 Robinson, 'Selected Letters', 171.

32 S. Ray, *Sukumār Samagra Rachanābali*, eds P. Chakravarti and K. Karlekar, 2 vols, Calcutta, 1381–2 (1974–5) contain all the pieces written for *Sandesh*. The best-known humorous writings came out later in separate volumes.

33 Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 100.

34 Lal, 'Sandesh', 441; Majumdar, *Dakshinā*, introduction to vol. II.

35 Nivedita, *Complete Works* (see ch. 7, note 1 below), 77.

36 On Sukumar, see H. Sanyal, 'Sukumar Rai' and 'Chitre Nonsense Club', *Desh*, 53rd Yr., 44, Sept. 1986 (Sukumar Number), 39–47.

37 'Laksmaner Shaktishel', *Sukumār Rachanābali*, I, 237–47.

38 Sanyal, 'Sukumar Rai', 41.

39 S. Ray, *Ābol Tābol*, Calcutta, 1375, 8–9; Heath Robinson in J. Ezard, 'Building on a Comic Genius', *The Guardian*, Sat. 1 July 1989, 23. Satyajit Ray made the suggestion about the Katzenjammer Kids. Also compare Edward Lear's 'creatures' and Ray's 'Hotch-Potch' (H. Jackson), *The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear*, London, 1975, xxvi and Chaudhuri, *Nonsense*, (note 40 below), 1.

40 Taken from the fine English translation of *Ābol Tābol* by Sukanta Chaudhuri (*The Select Nonsense of Sukumar Ray*, Calcutta, 1987, 44). The point made recently about A. A. Milne with his concern for innocence and

nostalgia may well apply to Lear: 'A familiar life, with a familiar English dialectic: in which at an early age, passion is denied, and displaced into less threatening forms (sentimentality, adult childishness, nostalgia, lament) but emerges curiously strengthened by this displacement, ready to be put to new uses . . .' (J. Wood, *A. A. Milne*, London, 1990, 22).

41 All Rushdie's novels thrive on this but the ill-fated *The Satanic Verses* celebrates it.

42 Satyajit Ray's introduction in Chaudhuri, *Nonsense*, unpaginated. Robinson, 'Selected Letters', 179. Jabberwocky in L. Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (Puffin edn which includes *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), London, 1976, 202.

43 Chaudhuri, *Nonsense*, 13, 20, 41.

44 K. Sarkar, '100 Years of Indian Cartoons (1850–1950)', *Vidura*, 6, 3 Aug. 1969, 1 ff. 6, 4 Nov. 1969, 25 ff.

45 R. Ray, *Urban Roots of Indian Nationalism*, Calcutta, 1979, 7. The cartoon is in the Lytton Collection. Mss. Eur. E, 218, 146 (IOL), papers connected with the Vernacular Press Law.

46 Ghosh, *Kārigari*, 106–7.

47 M. Horn, *The World Encyclopedia of Cartoons*, New York, 1980, 16. Political caricature thrived in Georgian Britain (T. Wright, *Caricature Hitory of the Georges*, London, 1876). 'The Temptation of Māra', Sanchi, East Gate, Top Lintel; on Kalighat, W. G. Archer, *Kalighat Paintings*, London, 1971.

48 M. Archer, 'Peoples of India', *Marg*, 40, No. 4, 1989, 8–9. Rudolf Ackermann brought out in 1828 D'Oyly's amusing poem.

49 R. P. Gupta source for *Purneah Punch*.

50 Horn, *Encyclopedia*, 25–8. D. Gifford, *The International Book of Comics*, London, 1984, 8. Many of these Indian magazines are difficult to trace today. G. Henry, 'Rumour of Punch's death no longer exaggerated', *The Guardian*, Wed. 25.3.1992, 22 on the founding of *Punch*.

51 G. F. Atkinson, *Curry and Rice or the Ingredients of Social Life at Our 'Station' in India*, London, 1859. The main characters are given names of various Indian dishes, such as 'Kabob', or of spices.

52 See above on Victorian paternalism; on 'anthropological' novels, B. V. Street, *The Savage in Literature*, London, 1975; Moore-Gilbert, *Literature*.

53 Vernacular Press Act (1878) and related politics, Seal, *Emergence*, 131–70.

54 *Delhi Sketch Book*, 1850, I, 23; Sarkar, *Vidura*, 6, 3, 1969, 1 ff. *Purasri*, Yr. 2, no. 1, 21 April 1979, 397.

55 *Delhi Sketch*, I, 121. On Tom Raw the Griffin see above, note 48.

56 *Delhi Sketch*, II, 1. 4. 1852, XII.

57 *The Indian Punch*, I, 1859, 1 ff. *Delhi Sketch*, I, 1850, 6; 61; 69; II, 122–3; IV, 1853, 30–1; V, 1854, 136.

58 *Indian Punch*, N. S. 37, II, 1863, 115. Atkinson, *Curry and Rice*, pl. 'Our Cook'.

59 *Indian Punch*, n.s. II, 37, 1874, 114.

60 Atkinson, *Curry and Rice*, 'Our Ball' and 'Our Invalid Major'. C. Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, London, 1971, 201 ff. on hardening attitudes.

61 *The Indian Charivari*, I, 1872; *Punch*, Jul.–Dec, 1875, cover.

62 *Indian Charivari*, 28.8.1875, 43; *Punch*, 65, 1873, 5, 'Persia Won!'. *Indian Charivari*, 1.10.1875, 79; 21.2.1873.

63 *Punch*, 70, 1876, 81. *The Charivari Album*, Calcutta, 1875; *Punch*, 64, 1873, 17.12.1872, 'Queen Lioness and Mme. Hippo'; 66, 23.5.1874, 217, 'Sheep' (animals symbolising nations). *Indian Charivari*, 13.6.1873.

64 *The Indian Charivari*, 11.7.1873; 1.10.1875, 78. One cartoon shows the reformer as Lord Kṛṣṇa enticing the women with degrees. The cartoon makes the connection between education and sexual freedom, an issue on which Englishmen and Indianmen had no difference. Also *The Indian Charivari*, 4.4.1873, 141. On Annette Akroyd, her descendant, Lord W. Beveridge, *India Called Them*, London, 1947, especially 75–182.

65 *Indian Charivari*, 10.1.1873, 23; W. Fever, *Masters of Caricature*, London, 1981, 9 ff. E. H. Gombrich, 'The Cartoonist's Armoury', *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*, London, 1965, 130–2.

66 *Indian Charivari*, 24.1.1873, 69, 73. L. P. Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, Newton Abbot, 1971, 34. Victorian cartoons reflecting popular prejudice include simianisation of the Irish (*Punch*, 1848) In *Anglo-Saxon and Celts*, Bridgport (Conn.), 1968, Curtis mentions the 'Africanoid' Irish in the works of Froude and Kingsley. Darwin himself did not propagate the idea of Africans as closer to apes though he did not disagree with it. On African blackness which makes it difficult to tell if he is angry, *Punch*, 1842, 222.

67 *Indian Charivari*, 7.3.1873, 108.

68 *Indian Charivari*, 23.1.1874, 17; A. J. Greenberger, *The British Image of India*, London, 1969, 49–51. Jabberjee, the knight errant with his English lady-love in F. Anstey (T. A. Guthrie) 'Jottings and Tittlings by Hurry Bungsho Jabberjee, BA', *Punch*, 109, 21.12.95, 300 and *passim* (illus. J. B. Partridge); published as a book in 1897 and the sequel, 'A Bayard from Bengal', *Punch*, Jul.–Dec 1900.

69 *Indian Charivari*, 12.6.1874, 142; 17.4.1874, 98. See Banerjea's version in *A Nation in Making*, London, 1925; Seal, *Emergence*, 380.

70 Macaulay quoted in J. Rosselli, 'The Self-Image of Effeteness: Physical Education and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Bengal', *Past and Present*, vol. 86, Feb. 1980, 121–48. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons*, 61 on the British image of the Irish as an effeminate race, unfit to rule.

71 Quoted in Seal, *Emergence*, 134. Greenberger, *British Image*, on Kipling's 'The Head of the District', 49–51.

72 Seal, *Emergence*, 140. Banerjea's party described by one Viceroy as having the 'ominous tendency to ape the tactics and organisation of Irish revolutionaries' (Seal, *Emergence*, 177).

73 *Indian Charivari*, 15.11.1872, 19. Rosselli, 'Self-image', 121–48. For Bengali responses T. Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered*, Delhi, 1988, 60, 115, 134, 160.

74 *Indian Charivari*, 5.2.1875, 33.

75 *Indian Charivari*, 27.6.1873, 199.

76 *Indian Charivari*, 20.2.1874, 39.

77 *Indian Charivari*, 24.1.73, 62. *The Hindoo Patriot*, founded by Harish Chandra Mukherjee, was continued by Kristodas Pal. Sisir Ghosh ran *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which kept up its demand for political concessions from the government.

78 *Mookerjee's Magazine*, I, ix, 50; III, 41, 55, 74; V, 76, 127 ff. The Dramatic Performances Bill (1876) led to widespread protests in Bengal. A. Weber,

Indian Antiquary, I, 1872, 120–4; 172–82; 239–53.

79 Gombrich, 'The Cartoonist's Armoury', *Meditations*, esp. 130–2.

80 *Hindi Punch*, Sixth Annual Publication, 1905 (preface).

81 *Hindi Punch* 1898 vol.; Annual Vol. 1905, 75 (Sept. 1905). Henceforth the volumes will be indicated by the years.

82 Annual vol. 1905, 23.; The National Congress cartoons from the *Hindi Punch*, 1886–1901 vol.; J. R. McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress*, Princeton, 1977.

83 *Hindi Punch*, 1889; Jan. 1887; 1888. Salisbury saw the Irish, the Orientals and the Hottentots as essentially inferior (Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons*, 102–3). On him, Lord Blake and H. Cecil, *Salisbury: the Man and His Policies*, London, 1987.

84 *Hindi Punch*, 1891; 1897; 1899, 12, 13, 14; 1900; 1904; 1905, 7; 1905, 27.

85 *Hindi Punch*, 1906, 3.

86 G. N. Curzon, *Lord Curzon in India*, London, 1906, 222.

87 1905, 30. On the conflict, S. Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1973, ch. 1. P. King, *The Viceroy's Fall: How Kitchener Destroyed Curzon*, London, 1986, who traces the deadly rivalry between the two protagonists, analyses Curzon's personality with its mixture of greatness and deep flaws that brought about his downfall. Interestingly, one R. Tagore sent this message on his resignation: 'with great sorrow, we are losing the great man and our greatest ruler' (p. 213).

88 1906, 5; 1905, 88.

89 On the politics of the era, J. M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, Cambridge, 1972.

90 *The Oudh Punch* (a selection from its publication between 1877–81), ed. A. Constable, Lucknow, 1881, introduction.

91 *Oudh Punch*, pls III, VI, XVI, XIX, XV. *Punch*, 16.12.1865.

92 E. Kris and E. H. Gombrich, 'The Principles of Caricature', *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 17, pts. 3 and 4, 1938, 319–42, on social and psychological functions of cartoons and the role of simplification and distortion in caricature.

93 There is no study yet of this but see S. Sen, *Bānglā Sāhityer Itihās*, Calcutta, 1965.

94 *Josthimodhu*, 10 on *Harbolā Bhānd*, 1874.

95 *Purasri*, Yr. 2, 1, 21.4.1979, 397. See *Basantak* cover (Fig. 87).

96 *Basantak*, Pt. 1, 8, 116–17 (famine relief). The famine broke out during Northbrook's rule; Pt. 1, 1, 24–5 (Mānbhanjan). On Manchester, *Basantak*, Pt. 1, 8, 94.

97 Ray, *Urban Roots*, 15–17.

98 Cited in *Purasri*, 408. Ray, *Urban Roots*.

99 *Purasri*, Yr. 2, 4, 402–3. *Basantak*, Pt. 1, 10, 124–5 (Varāhavatār); Pt. 1, 5, 68–9 (Chātār Nutan Byābahār).

100 *Purasri*, Yr. 2. 4, 398; 15.12.1979, 974–5 on Kristo Das Pal. C. E. Ilbert, the Law Member on Pal: a 'great orator and a great journalist, who would have made his mark in any country and at any time' (C. E. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, 1905, 327). Interestingly, both Pal and Datta died in their forties within a few years of each other.

101 *Basantak*, Pt. 1, 3, 40–1; pt. 1, 8, 124–5; pt. 2, 6, 77–82, pt. 1, 7, 92–3, 8, 90–6. Also *Purasri*, 29.12.1979, 990.

102 *Bhārat Barsha*, Yr. 4, I, 4, 1324 (1917), 599–605; II, 1, 1324 (1917), 142: 4, II, 3, 411; 4, II, 6, 790 were a few.

103 Ray, *Ābol Tābol*.

104 Abanindranath Tagore's caricatures were not published but they remain in the Rabindra Bharati Collection, Calcutta.

105 *Mānasi o Maramabāni*, Yr. 10, II, 2, 1310 (1917), 180–1. On Jatin Sen, see B. B. Ghosh, 'Shilpi Jatindra Kumār Sen', in *Desh Binodan* (Special No.), 1387 (1980), 151–5.

106 Rajsekhar Bose's 'Rātārāti' is in *Hanumāner Swapna* and 'Kachi Samsad' is in *Kajjali*. Kalighat *pat* in Archer, *Kalighat Paintings*, pl. 77. *Bhārat Barsha*, Yr. 5, I, 5, 778; Yr. 6, I, 1, 1325, 86; Yr. 7, I, 6, 1326, frontispiece.

107 *Basantak* cited in *Josthimadhu*, 40. Emancipated women and consequent loose morals in a late novel *Pāsh Karā Māg* (1902) by R. B. Haldar similar to women of easy virtue in early English novels who invariably come to a sorry end. 'Māg' is a vulgar term, the equivalent of slut. The 'graduate slut' is in the nude or semi-nude throughout the work (N. Sarkar (Sripantha), *Keyābāt Meye*, Calcutta, 1988, 23).

108 R. Tagore, *RR*, 11, 632.

109 *Basantak*, Pt. 2, 9. 109–10.

110 'Womens' revolt', *Mānasi o Marmabāni*, Yr. 2, 14, Bhādra 1326, 86. *Bhārat Barsha*, Yr. 17, 7 Agrahāyan, 1331, 17.

111 N. C. Chaudhuri, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, London, 1951, 454.

112 C. Schultz-Hoffman, *Simplicissimus, ein Satirische Zeitschrift, München 1896–1944*, Munich, 1978, 181, fig. 135 and *passim*. Gaganendranath's style also resembles Max Beerbohm a little and it is likely that Beerbohm knew *Simplicissimus* but the Indian artist's savage caricature is closer to the German magazine.

113 Press notices on *Birup Bajra* in *Realm of the Absurd: Adbhut Lok*, Calcutta, 1917 (*Englishman*, 17.8.1917).

114 See Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 219–53.

115 A. L. Basham was one of the first to turn to the subject. See his introduction in V. G. Vitsaxis, *Hindu Epics, Myths and Legends*, Delhi, 1977, ix. One of the finest collections of Indian prints (with a useful hand-list by David Jones) is at the Wellcome Institute.

116 Mukharji, quoted in Archer, *Kalighat Paintings*, 9. N. Sarkar, 'Calcutta Woodcuts', in Paul, *Woodcut Prints*, 11–47.

117 Bagchi, *Annadā*, 50. Bagal, *Rāmānanda*, 15. Cf. illustrations in S. M. Tagore, *Six Principal Ragas with a View of Hindu Music*, Calcutta, 1877.

118 Bagal, *Rāmānanda*, 11.

119 *Prabāsi*, VII, 3, 1314 (1907), 169; Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 135.

120 For the history of Calcutta Art Studio I am grateful to the present owners, the descendants of Nabakumar Biswas.

121 On Balendranath, see below, ch. 6.

122 These prints belong to the Biswas family. The Bhau Bul Co. as well as Calcutta Art Studio prints are in the Wellcome Institute. The Victoria and Albert Museum also has a good collection of Calcutta Art Studio chromolithographs (*Arts of Bengal*), London, 1979, 37, 52 (V & A scrapbook)). Nimai Chatterjee in his large collection of matchbox logos has one with the

Nimai Chatterjee in his large collection of matchbox logos has one with the image of Kālī. C. Pinney, 'Kali' in C. Bayly (ed.), *The Raj: India and the British 1600–1947*, London, 1990, 341.

5. THE ARTIST AS CHARISMATIC INDIVIDUAL: RAJA RAVI VARMA

1 *Modern Review*, I, 1–6, Jan.–Jun. 1907, 84.

2 *The Times*, 25.12.1906. Varma has either been idolised or judged by modernism that fails to see his importance (cf. a typical instance above, ch. 1). Recent essays on Varma include T. Guha Thakurta ('Westernisation and Tradition in South Indian Painting in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Raja Ravi Varma 1848–1906', *Studies in History*, II, 2 (n.s), 1986, 165–196) and G. Kapoor, 'Ravi Varma: Representational Dilemmas of a Nineteenth Century Painter', *Journal of Arts & Ideas*, Nos. 17–18, June 1989, 59–75.

3 D. G. Phalke's spectacular film, 'Raja Harishchandra', shows Varma's inspiration. On Phalke, E. Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film*, Oxford, 1980, 10–21; G. Sadoul, *Dictionnaire des Cinéastes*, Paris, 1965, 177. Wood, *Olympian Dreamers*, 129 and 253 on Alma-Tadema and Edwin Long's influence on the director, Griffith, especially Long's *Babylonian Marriage Market*. Goddesses in popular prints are indebted to Varma's ideal (pls. in Vitsaxis, *Hindu Epics*).

4 Curzon quoted in Anonymous, *Ravi Varma the Indian Artist*, Allahabad, (1902), 10. There is strong evidence that this undated authorised biography is by Ramananda Chatterjee.

5 *Victoria Memorial Correspondence*, I, Calcutta, 1901–4, 114a.

6 *The Times*, 25.12.1906.

7 P. N. N. Pillai, *Artist Ravi Varma Koil Tampuran Artist Prince*, 1912, the first Malayalam biography, reproduces Ampthill's letter of 3.12.1906.

8 Letter of Gomez da Costa, A.D.C. to the Portuguese Governor-General, Palace de Cabo, of 15.4.1894 (Raja Varma's Diary) (see note 11 below).

9 R. Tagore, 'Pitrismriti', in B. Choudhury, *Lipir Shilpi Abanindranāth*, Calcutta, 1973, 81.

10 E. Kris and O. Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, London, 1979.

11 N. B. Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma* Trivandrum, 1953, 6. This Malayalam biography, by far the most detailed, makes use of interviews with family members and documents, including the diary of C. Raja Raja Varma. But it is uncritical (I am grateful to K. Thomas and V. Asokan for translating the work). Kris and Kurz, *Legend*, 51.

12 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 7–10; P. Tampy, *Ravi Varma Koil Tampuran*, Trivandrum, 1934, 4. I. Varma, 'Artist of the People and of Gods', *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 97, 22 May–30 June 1976, 20 (Indira Varma is a great-niece of the artist); Kris and Kurz, *Legend*, 25.

13 K. M. Varma, *Ravi Varma A Sketch*, Trivandrum, n.d. Nayar, 29–30, quotes sister Mangalabai Tampuratti.

14 Quoted in Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 124 ff.

15 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, ch. 3 (Theodore Jensen) 27–34. Kris and Kurz,

Legend, 15–17.

16 Raja Ravi Varma diary (RRV), 16.5.1901; Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 48; on artistic rivalry, Kris and Kurz, *Legend* 120–5. I vainly searched the archives, especially the general catalogue, *Wiener Weltausstellung* (1873) and the British official catalogue, J. F. Watson, *A Classified and Descriptive Catalogue of the Indian Department* (Vienna Universal Exhibition, 1873), London, 1873, for Varma in Vienna. Instead I discovered that the young Maharaja of Travancore sent his court painter, Ramaswamy Naidu's oil, *A Lady Playing an Indian Lute*, and an ivory miniature by him. The Madras art school students also sent works. That Varma had not exhibited is suggested by the fact that unlike Chicago and other exhibitions where the works submitted by Varma are meticulously documented, there is not record, for instance, of what he showed in Vienna.

17 I. Varma, 'Artist of the People', 23; Kris and Kurz, *Legend*, x, 2, 62; Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 223.

18 I. Varma, 'Artist of the People', 25.

19 Tampy, *Ravi Varma*, 2. He paraphrased Pillai's title of 1912 (see above n. 7). Though Varma held the Keralan title of Tampuran (chief), he was universally called Raja. Perhaps by popular demand? Ramananda's *Prabāsi* is probably the earliest to coin it (Part 1, 8–9, Aghrahayan-Paush, 1308 (1901), 297). Gokhale's conversation with son Rama Varma quoted in Nayar *Raja Ravi Varma*, 135–6. Ampthill's letter (in P. N. N. Pillai, *Artist*) on the artist's gentle nature.

20 R. Chatterjee, in *Prabāsi*, Part I, 4, Sraban, 1308 (1901), 153 and I, 8–9 Agh-Paush, 1308, 297–302.

21 Mangalabai Tampuratti's portrait of Ravi Varma is now in Sri Chitralaya Gallery, Trivandrum. His second son Rama Varma was a successful painter, a vocation continued by his descendants, especially his great-niece Rukmini Varma, a painter of large mythological canvases.

22 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 12–3. On R. R. Varma, Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, ch. 1 (The Teacher's Foresight), 7 ff. *Prabāsi*, Pt. I, 8–9, 1308, 297–8. Raja Raja Varma's portrait by Ravi Varma shows a man with powerful features. Raja's painting of Sivaji, the last king of Tanjore, is in Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma* (pl. 5). Raja's teacher Alagiri Naidu was at Swati Tirunal's court. Is it likely that Raja practised oils though he specialised in ivory painting?

23 M. Archer, *Company Drawings*. See exhibition catalogue, S. C. Welch, *Room For Wonder*, New York, 1978, especially pl. 77 (Ettanettan Tampuran, Calicut, c. 1845, watercolour) for affinities between Tanjore works and later oils. Ramaswamy practised oil and ivory painting. S. M. Datta, 'Mural Paintings of Kerala', *Modern Review*, 85, 1949, 39–43.

24 Varma, *Ravi Varma*, 7. Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 35. Jensen's works are in private and public collections, including the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta and the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay (V. Parab, 'Portrait Painting in India in the late 19th Century', *Roopa Bheda*, 1983–4 (unpaginated)). Macdonand, *Art Education*, 55 on Reynolds.

25 *Prabāsi*, 8–9, 298. Krishnaputhira, 'Our Indian Artist: A Personal Sketch of Raja Ravi Varma (a letter in newspaper dated 25 January in c. 1901 preserved in the family, with the year and the name of the newspaper missing).

26 RRV, 28.5.95, 'The Late Mr Ravi Varma A famous Artist', Trivandrum, 15.9.1906, obituary in the family (newspaper name obliterated), based on material published in *Indian Ladies Magazine*, during the artist's lifetime (Brooks); *Marg*, 1986, on Jensen's portrait. The accession portrait, Goetz, *Fatesingh Museum*, 3 (No. A14).

27 (Goetz references in this note refer to *Fatesingh Museum*.) The Tarabai (1871–97) early portrait is no. A 10 and later one is no. A 9 (Goetz, 2). Portraits by earlier artists at Baroda are of varying degrees of 'solidity'. A relatively flat style is *Maharaja Khande Rao with attendants* (A 4, Goetz, 1), while *Maharaja Anand Rao* (A 1 and 2, Goetz, 1) and *Maharani Jamnabai* by Hansaji Raghunath, 1878 (A 7 Goetz, 2), are illusionistic. The second Tarabai portrait is based on actual sittings as are also portraits of Chimnabai II (A 19 and 20, Goetz, 4). In a pamphlet at the Kunsthistorischesmuseum, Vienna, Martina Haja mentions the ambivalence in fifteenth-century Italian painting between Gothic form and colour and new realism. Not only did this divide artists into traditional and progressive ones, but the tendency can be detected even in the works of individual artists.

28 On tinted photographs, Gutman, *Through Indian Eyes* (above, ch. 3, note 56).

29 National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.

30 RRV, 11.7.1901. Mrs Rukmini Varma showed me the Royal Academy Pictures in *Magazine of Art* (1898) used by the Varmas. Each picture was stamped after study. There were also German art books in the family but I could not see them. They must have come from F. Schleicher and Gerhardt (see below, p. 189).

31 RRV, 19.1.1895. Varma's copy of Constant's *Judith* (Baroda) is in Trivandrum.

32 *Pearson's Magazine* (n.d., reproduced in a local paper, now in the family) Krishnaputhira, 'Our Indian Artist', describes Ravi Varma as 'every inch a gentleman'. On being rejected by Eliya Raja, Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 21–2. R. Chatterjee, *Mhatre Testimonials* (ch. 3, note 48, above), 23, on the rise of the new gentlemen artists.

33 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 23 ff. *Pearsons Magazine* (n.d., see above note 32); *Prabāsi*, I, 8–9, Agrah.–Paush, 1308, 298. On modernisation of Travancore, R. Jeffrey, 'Travancore: Status, Class and the Growth of Radical Politics', in Jeffrey, ed. *People . . . and Paramount Power*, 140 ff.

34 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 43. *Ravi Varma the Indian Artist*, 4–10 on Chisholm. *The Times*, 25.12.06.

35 The Diary, the most valuable source for Ravi Varma, exists in fragments. I am grateful to Professor R. M. Varma, Dr Vaskara Varma and Shri K. C. Rama Varma for giving me access to it. It was kept from 1895 to 1904 but the last year was missing in my copy. On professionalism, Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 22. M. Pointon, 'Portrait Painting as a Business Enterprise in London in 1780s', *Art History*, 7, No. 2, June 1984, 187–205. The *Purānic* paintings at Baroda were the most important commission for the artists, each canvas measuring 63 in. × 44 in. Though assisting his brother now, Raja had not yet begun his diary. The 19.1.95 entry on the Baroda paintings during their visit to Laxmi Vilas Palace.

36 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 87 ff. 116–17, 217; Varma, RRV, 23.

37 Varma, *A Narrative of the Tour in Upper India of H.H. Prince, Martanda Varma of Travancore*, 1896 (printed for private circulation; I was able to consult a copy in the family), 31. The Preface thanks two British professors of Maharaja's College, Trivandrum for advice. If one compares this essay with corresponding diary entries, one is struck by the refreshing brevity and directness of the latter. E. Eden, *Up the Country*, 1866, Oxford, 1930 edn. On Horace van Ruith, a Dutch painter (1844–89) whose painting *Deccani Brahmin* is the one mentioned here (C 70, Goetz, *Fatesingh Museum*, 31).

38 Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 148.

39 RRV, 10.1.1899; 12.1.1899; 6.2.1901; 26.4.1901.

40 RRV, 7–8.5.1901.

41 List of princely states they had visited as portraitists: Mysore, Baroda, Bhavnagar, Palitana, Jaipur, Alwar, Gwalior, Rattam, Indore and Udaipur, with varying periods of stay, supplemented by information for 1895–1903, in RRV, 11–26.1.1901. *The Times* (25.12.1906) on Buckingham portrait, whose comment in Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 36. RRV, 23.6.1902. and *passim*. The eminent Indian judge, M. G. Ranade, and Sir T. M. Rao were their patrons. On Sir Arthur Havelock and Sir George Moore see below, p. 193.

42 RRV, 31.1.1901; 6.4.1901.

43 RRV, 23.6.1902. Mukharji, *Art*, 14–15. On Prinsep, see above, ch. 2, M. Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, 62, 152, 104. Even though we know little about later European artists, fees of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century visiting Europeans are available. We can use them for comparison if we allow for increases in the cost of living by the end of the century and the change in the exchange rate of rupees to the pound for the whole period (which seems to have increased from Rs 10 to Rs 14). George Willison, for instance, charged 150 Pagodas (or £60, for Pagoda, an early form of money used by the East India Company, was worth £120) for a full-length portrait, while Zoffany could charge Rs 700 (@ £1 = Rs 10) for a three-quarter one. A full-length portrait including frame by the Varmas costing Rs 1,500 was thus roughly comparable in real terms, though slightly less. However, someone as eminent as Reynolds, enjoying an enviable reputation in the latter half of the eighteenth century, could command £200 for a full-size portrait. Hence, a more pertinent comparison would be with Reynolds' Italian contemporary, Pompeo Batoni in Rome. A highly competent painter, yet he charged only £50 for a portrait. By the late nineteenth century, however, the history painter Edwin Long was able to command 6,300 guineas for his *Babylonian Marriage Market*, a record for a living British painter, even though the work was on a massive scale (J. Chapel, *Victorian Taste*, London, 1982, 13). On Batoni, L. Gowing, ed., *A Biographical Dictionary of Artists*, London, 1983, 39.

44 RRV, 11.3.1903; 17.3.1903.

45 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 38, 140–3; Veniyoor, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 36. The diary (20.9.1902) mentions the Raja of Cochin excommunicating a friend of theirs for going abroad.

46 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 38. RRV, 7.10.1903; 2–3.6.1901; 9.1.1899; 16.6.1895; 11.7.1901; 17.2.1903. Visits to the theatre, 6.8.1901; 15.1.1895; 26.6.1897; 20.2.1901 (with Edmund Russell, visiting American actor, a

great admirer of Ravi Varma); 20.7.1901; 2.8.1901; 28.9.1903; 29.10.1903; 12.11.1903.

47 RRV, 30.6.97. 20–25.3.99. 31.1.1901 (generally in Bombay in Jul.–Aug.); 3.8.1901; 7.8.1901; 19.4.1902; 11.8.1902. Also Pointon, 'Portrait Painting', 190–2.

48 RRV, 23.7.1901–5.8.1901.

49 RRV, 23.6.1902; 1–4.9.1902 (price included frame); 10.9.1902. They were guests of an Indian dignitary, Lord Govinda Das.

50 RRV, 16.9.1902–26.10.1902; 29.10.1902; 17.6.1903; 21–25.7.1903.

51 RRV, 10.9.1902–2.1.1903, period in Madras. The landscape with the mosque is in Madras Museum. Mrs Atkinson's husband, J. A. Atkinson, was a member of the Governor's Council in Madras.

52 RRV, 13.3.1901.

53 RRV, 26.2.1901–14.3.1901. On Ambalal Sarabhai see, J. M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, Cambridge, 1972, 115–18.

54 R. Ray, 'Mewar: The Breakdown of the Princely Order' in Jeffrey, *People*, 206, 223–4. RRV, 21.3.1901; 31.3.1901; 6.4.1901; 8.4.1901.

55 On having completed ten landscape sketches, RRV, 1.6.1901. RRV, 10.4.1901; 29.3.1901 (Raj Singh was the trial picture); 19.4.1901; 27.5.1901 (Bhil woman); 14–15.5.1901; 4–6.6.1901.

56 RRV, 31.3.1901–18.6.1901 (Pratap's painting continued along with other work). Ref. to Tod's *Annals of Rajasthan* in the diary (31.3.1901) is typical of Ravi Varma's historicism. Tod's romantic view of Rajput history was used by later nationalists. Raja mentions that they drew a horse for Pratap but this seems to be an error, for the two versions of the portrait do not contain any horse.

57 RRV, 12/13.4.1901. 19.5.1901 (exact likeness), 21.5.1901. 24.5.1901. 31.5.1901 (measurement for portrait). 18.6.1901. 26.6.1901. 28.6.1901.

58 The Maharana's comments, RRV, 6.5.1901; 26.6.1901; 29–30.6.1901.

59 RRV, 21.1.1902; 23.1.1902.

60 RRV, 26.1.1902.

61 RRV, 10.2.1902; 12/13.2.1902; 15.2.1902; 19.2.1902.

62 RRV, 19.2.1902; 5.3.1902. C. Worswick and A. Embree, *The Last Empire, Photography in British India*, New York, 1976, 9.

63 RRV, 8.3.1902. On friction between the brothers and Deen Dayal, RRV, 6.2.1902; 11.2.1902 and the threat felt by Dayal by their presence. Varma successfully challenged photography, suggested here by Dayal's apprehension, even though Dayal was an immensely successful entrepreneur (see above, p. 95).

64 RRV, 11.4.1902. The final payment made by Hyderabad officials on 51.8.1903; 14.9.1903. On Banias, 14.11.1903.

65 *The Times*, 25.12.1906. On industrial exhibitions, P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, Manchester, 1988, where even human beings formed exhibits.

66 Varma's certificates, reproduced in Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 132, mention that the award was for naturalism. See *JRSA*, 2165, 42, 18 May 1894, 588 on The Diffusion of Knowledge awards.

67 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 131 (award for ethnography). Also *JRSA*, 607, on Dayal and Varma in the ethnographic section. The publications on the fine arts section of the Columbian Exhibition do not mention Varma at all (M. P.

Handy, *Official Directory of World's Columbian Exposition*, Chicago, 1893; M. P. Handy, *World's Columbian Exposition* (Revised Catalogue, Department of Fine Arts), Chicago, 1893; C. M. Kurtz, ed., *Official Illustrations From the Art Gallery of the World's Columbian Exposition*, Philadelphia, 1893).

68 *The Times*, 25.12.06.

69 RRV on the Jewish sitter, 3–11.2.1901 (the painting is in Madras). On *Poverty*, 1893 (now in Trivandrum), Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 57.

70 J. Reynolds, Discourse XIII, speaks of history painters and Classical landscapists in the same vein, in Holt, *Documentary History*, II, 281. By the late eighteenth century artists like Benjamin West had moved to national history from Classical themes. H. Honour, *Neoclassicism*, London, 1968, 32 ff. Barrell, *Political Theory*, 2 and 95 on civic humanism.

71 Napier's address quoted in W. G. Archer, *India and Modern Art*, 21; Barrell, *Political Theory*, 24 on art and rhetoric; see below, ch. 7.

72 L. Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, London, 1971. J. M. Crook, *The Greek Revival*, London, 1972. G. E. Daniel, *A Hundred Years of Archaeology*, London, 1950 on the reconstruction of the past in the West connected with nationalism. Reynolds' comment with reference to Poussin, Holt, *Michelangelo and the Mannerists . . . the Eighteenth Century*, New York, 1958, 287.

73 J. Bagal, *Hindu Melār Itibritta*, Calcutta, 1968, 24–5, quoting *Sulav Samāchār* (21.2.1871). K. M. Varma, *Ravi Varma*, 8–11. F. Haskell, 'The Manufacture of the Past in Nineteenth-Century Painting', in *Past and Present in Art and Taste*, New Haven, 1987, 75–89, on the history painter's insistence on precise information, including use of contemporary material that bore on the subject.

74 Boulanger women were supposed to have inspired Varma. Harding, *Artistes*, on French academic artists and Wood, *Dreamers*, on British ones. The most important theoretician of artistic historicism was Jacques-Louis David. At the opening of the exhibition of his painting on the Sabine Women, he spoke on the importance of recovering the customs and institutions of the past, thus inaugurating the 'archaeological' approach to art, Holt, *From the Classicists*, (above, ch. 3, note 5), 4. On David, W. Friedlaender, *David to Delacroix*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1963.

75 *Prabāsi*, I, 8–9, 300.

76 RRV, 2.6.97. Moor's Kṛṣṇa left an indelible impression on Varma, as seen in his Kṛṣṇa, Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 33. On Moor, Mitter, *Monsters*, 178.

77 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 86. RRV, 31.3.1901; 14.3.1902.

78 Barrell, *Political Theory*, 59. Photograph in Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, pl. 15. I am grateful to B. N. Goswamy for the information on traditional Punjab painters.

79 On Alma-Tadema, Wood, *Dreamers*, ch. 3. On types of heroines, there is no specific work, but see works by W. G. Archer on Rajput miniatures. Varma's two versions of *Śakuntalā Writing Love Epistle to Duśyanta*, a seated one in Madras as well as the birth of Śakuntalā were widely diffused in prints. I have not been able to trace the original of the Buckingham Śakuntalā lying on the ground. On the seated version in M. Monier Williams' translation *Sakooontala; or The Lost Ring*, London, 1887, 5th edn: 'This is in many respects an improved edition, and has the advantage of an interesting frontispiece, from an oil-painting by a native of Baroda, which I

owe to the kindness of the present enlightened and liberal minded Maha-raja Gaikwar'. The work is not by a native of Baroda, but by Varma as also confirmed by other sources. Since this was before Varma turned to oleography, is it possible that Monier Williams was sent an oil painting, the one recently acquired by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford? Another copy of the work is now in Baroda, acquired only ten years ago. I thank Dr Schupbach for the felicitous description, 'the Guercino ideal'.

80 On meeting with Gaekwad of Baroda, Veniyoor, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 26–7. Jeffrey, *People*, 20. Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, chs 12 and 13. D. Hardiman, 'Baroda, The Structure of a "Progressive" State', in Jeffrey, *People*, 113 ff.

81 RRV, 2.1.1902. On Gokhale, B. R. Nanda, *Gokhale*, Delhi, 1977. Seal, *Emergence*, 246; G. Johnson, *Provincial Politics*, 5 ff.

82 Hardiman, 'Baroda', 123–4. *Modern Review*, Pt. 1, 1–6, Jan.–Jun. 1907, 84. RRV, 6–12.11.1903. Tilak, who introduced Shivaji Festivals in Maharastra, is said to have remarked that, unlike the prevailing images of Shivaji, 'this painting [by Varma] takes the view of 18th-century politics . . . Looking at [it] one immediately thinks of the whole . . . of the great warrior. So he must be congratulated' (Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 90).

83 Veniyoor, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 28. Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 116–17; also Uma Varma (personal communication).

84 Barrell, *Political Theory*, 19 and 24.

85 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, ch. 12, 115 ff; RRV, 5.2.1899 (list of fourteen paintings). On women who came to the studio, RRV, 5.2.1899.

86 In addition to the Baroda fourteen, there are nine large-scale *Purāṇic* compositions at Mysore, but fewer in Trivandrum.

87 RRV, 20.6.1901. On figure drawing, see below, ch. 3, p. 92. Nude modelling did not become the norm in art schools before the 1920s. The students usually copied from the antique but cf. Dhurandhar, *Kalamandiran-til*, (ch. 2, note 28, above), 16 and 60, on life model.

88 Raja Varma had a better grasp of the undraped human figure as seen in his painting in Madras. Ravi Varma's most frequently used model was Kasi Bai, a Goanese Hindu (mss. cat. of Sri Chitra Art Gallery, Trivandrum).

89 Veniyoor, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 2.

90 This comes out clearly in *Captive Sītā, Rāvana and Jatāyu* (Mysore) and *Victory of Indrajit* (Mysore).

91 *Śakuntalā's Love Epistle to Duśyanta* is a good example, as well as *Captive Sītā*, where the ogresses are nude to the waist. Evangelical influence as part of westernisation took the form of Victorian blouses and petticoats, the fashion for which was set by the Brahmos in Calcutta and Parsis in Bombay. On a caricature of the fashion for 'modest' western dress, see above, ch. 4, p. 167.

92 On Long, Wood, *Dreamers*, 137, 146, 205, 253. Long's Babylonian Marriage Market was one of the largest works of that genre (Chapel, *Victorian Taste*, 13).

93 The mixture of voyeurism and sado-masochism was a favourite of the Orientalist painters. Varma's contrasts between light and dark skin owe directly to Gerôme (M. Verrier, *The Orientalists*, London, 1979, 127 but also Chasseriau and other French artists in P. Jullian, *The Orientalists*, Oxford, 1977); L. Nochlin on Gerôme's stereotypical presentation of the orient ('The Imaginary Orient', *Art in America*, May 1983, 122 ff.). While European

artists were constructing an imaginary orient, Varma, an Eastern artist, appropriated this image for his own image of ancient India.

94 RRV, 28.9.1903; 29.10.1903; 15.1.1895. Wood, *Dreamers*, 123 on Alma-Tadema's interest in the theatre.

95 K. C. Aryan, *100 Years Survey of Punjab Paintings*, Patiala, 1977, 28, on Sri Ram. Though inspired by Varma, Dhurandhar and Muller's styles were different.

96 See above, ch. 3. Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, chs 11 and 12.

97 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 63, on Varma encouraging ordinary people to appreciate art; also 63, 99, 102 ff., 106. Of course Nayar sees it as an entirely altruistic act.

98 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, ch. 12, 109–116 and 118–19.

99 RRV, 20.7.1904; Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, ch. 20 (especially reference to 7.7.1904); V. N. S. Desikan, *Government Museum Guide to the National Art Gallery*, Madras, 1967.

100 RRV, 29.9.1902. Honour, *Neoclassicism*, 88. Harding, *Artistes*, 9.

101 RRV, 18.3.1903. Gutman, *Through Indian Eyes*, 96. Haskell, *Rediscoveries*, 104 ff.; on nineteenth-century reproductions of art, pointing out the great improvements with the advent of photographic reproductions in the 1880s (see above, p. 173).

102 Quoted in Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 92.

103 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 122. On Poona Chitrasala Press, see above, ch. 4 (an extensive collection of Poona prints at the Wellcome Institute).

104 *Narrative of Tour*, 24.

105 Varma is associated with a new feminine beauty whose mild eroticism contrasted with more blatant prints. There is however a print of Kṛṣṇa hiding the clothes of the gopis, which subject has always led to *risqué* depictions. The nude women in this particular print, which claims to be from Ravi Varma Press but is clearly not by him, are copied from European painting (Wellcome Institute No. 266 but cf. 162, 166 which are similar) Varma's famous erotic ones are the semi-nude *Mohinī*, *Tilottamā*, *Belle of Malaya*, *Padminī*, *Variṇī* and *Gangāvataraṇa*.

106 B. Tagore, 'Robibarmā (1300)' and 'Hindu Deb-debir Chitra' in A. Acharya and S. Som, *Bānglā Shilpa Samalochanār Dhārā*, Calcutta, 1986, 60–1; 68–9.

107 Acharya and Son, see note 106 above.

108 Tagore, 'Robibarmā', 62 and *passim*.

109 Wellcome Institute (most prints plagiarise European paintings, mostly Renaissance).

110 The Institute has a magnificent collection of Varma prints.

111 On Bamapada, see above, p. 177. Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 106.

112 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 120 ff, 132 ff. Also 'Late Mr Ravi Varma' (note 26 above) on the press site in Kalbadebi Road, Bombay. The partner's name was Govardhandas Khatau Makhanji. Diary details running of the press with F. Schleicher and B. Gerhardt (21.10.1903). Nayar has a fairly complete list of oleographs; on primers, RRV, 9.1.1901.

113 RRV, 22.6.97; 14.1.99; 18.3.99; 21.9.1903; 1.10.1903. Most of the Wellcome Institute prints have A. K. Joshi stamped on them. The prints based on Baroda and Mysore paintings mention that they were produced after the

artist's death with the permission of the galleries. Bapuji Sakharam were a leading firm who offered prizes at the BAS show in 1888 (see N. Bhagwat, *Times of India*, 18.1.89).

114 RRV, 7.1.1902.

115 RRV, 19.7.1897.

116 Venniyoor, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 37. The harsh anti-plague measures led a Maharastran revolutionary, Damodar Hari Chapekar, to assassinate the plague commissioner, Rand (E. Kedourie, 'The Making of a Terrorist: From the Autobiography of Damodar Hari Chapekar', in *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, London, 1970, 398 ff.). On Chapekar in RRV, 13.2.1899. The money to pay back Makhanji was advanced by a doctor friend, Sir Balakrishna Chandra (18.3.1899 and 20.7.1901).

117 RRV, 7.11.1903.

118 *Nala Damayantī* from CAS (Wellcome Inst. Cat. No. 116). Poona Chitrasala Press *Rādhā Mādhav* (Wellcome 160). Benjamin, 'Work of art', 221–3.

119 Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 135.

120 On CAS, *Journal of Indian Art*, I, Oct. 1886, 69. Bhau Bul Co. of London *Kālī* (Wellcome 175); Poona C. Press (Wellcome 166) is a pirated version of possibly a Varma print (215). Also, Varma prints at Wellcome Inst. 213, 214, 223, and especially 207 with the reg. no. 147. Crude prints purporting to be by Varma are also at the Institute. The Varma prints of 1895 and 1896 carry his distinctive signature with the date inscribed on the picture. But the problem is, the signature itself could be forged so that we have no way of verifying its authenticity. Another series of prints dating from 1895 add the word 'copyright'. This presumably was not sufficient to prevent forgery; later prints had an additional registration number. Some early prints also display the imprimatur, Ravi Varma Fine Art Lithographic Press, which can be accepted as genuine. Possibly the safest way to identify a Varma print would be not only to rely on the inscription, but also to examine the actual quality which is quite distinctive (cf. nos. 207–56).

121 But also see matchbox using *The Death of Jatāyu*. The glass door of a north Calcutta jeweller's shop still sports the motif. The Varma postcards were first printed by his press with numbers on them (Nimai Chatterjee Collection.). Later they were exported from Saxony (Indar Pasricha). On Landseer's painting, Chapel, *Victorian Taste*, 13.

122 Possibly from the eighteenth century, India offered a lucrative market for foreign traders. Glass paintings arose in Bohemia and Germany as folk art, and were then taken to China by Jesuits. In time they became a major Chinese export though not popular at home. Glass paintings were brought by Chinese artists to South India. English visitors to the Satara court in Maharastra saw new glass paintings by Chinese artists hung on walls in a western manner. Later Indian artists adopted the mode. J. Appasamy, *Indian Paintings on Glass*, New Delhi, 1980 (a glass painting based on Varma print (p. 81)); U.K. Mehta, *Folk Paintings on Glass*, Baroda, 1984. By the mid-nineteenth century the export market expanded, especially for prints. The Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay, possesses early twentieth-century German porcelains based on Varma oleographs (provenance Sri Bal Tambe and the present director, Sadashiv Gorakshkar). The Japanese 'Samurai' ivory figures also belong to the museum.

123 Quoted in Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, 180. RRV, 25.12.1903–1.1.1904.
124 RRV, 23.1.1901. On Victoria as a potent symbol of empire, S. Weintraub, *Victoria*, London, 1987.
125 Victoria Memorial Correspondence, I, 1901–4, 114a. RRV, 2.4.1901; see above, ch. 4, p. 155 and below, ch. 8, p. 294. Nayar, *Raja Ravi Varma*, chs 20 and 21 on the deaths of the brothers.
126 See above, ch. 3, p. 70–2.
127 Letter (22.8.1906), reproduced in *Prabāsi*, Yr. VI, 7, 1313 (1906), 412.
128 Mukharji, *Art*, 15. The diary gives a clear picture of the brothers' social standing. Wherever they went they were visited by local dignitaries, including the English Resident. They received a baby elephant from the Mysore ruler, bought another one for Rs 3,000 (RRV 10–11.2.1903) and were promised yet another by the Kollengode ruler (RRV 9.1.1903).
129 R. Tagore, *Chhinna-Patrābali*, 12 May 1893, *RR*, 11, 106.

6. BENGALI PATRIOTS AND ART FOR THE NATION

1 Nivedita, 'Function of Art in Shaping Nationality', *Modern Review*, Jan.–Feb. 1907 (*Complete Works*, III, 16–17); *Mod. Rev.*, 8, 2, Aug. 1910, 207, and below, ch. 7, p. 254–9.
2 Bagal, *Hindu Melā*, 6–9 (1880, the 14th session was the last one).
3 Bagal, *Hindu Melā*, 14, 21.
4 Bagal, *Hindu Melā*, 34; on Tinkari, 24–5.
5 Bagal, *Hindu Melā*, 45.
6 Bagal, *Hindu Melā*, 83. K. Sarkar, 'Shyāmācharan Srimāni', *Shilpisaptak*, 33.
7 Founding of *Shilpa Pushpānjali* in Begal, *Centenary*, 14.
8 *Pradip*, II, 1, Paush, 1305; the painter Gaganendranath wrote a letter to Mhatre on 12.6.1899 (*Mhatre Test.*, 14, 23). I have modified the translation slightly.
9 R. Chatterjee, 'To the Temple', *The Kāyastha Samāchār*, Oct.–Nov. 1899, [*Mhatre Test.*, 21].
10 Chatterjee, 'To the Temple'.
11 S. Srimani, *Sukshma Shilper Utpatti o Ārya Jātir Shilpa Chāturi.*, Calcutta, 1874, in Acharya and Som, *Bānglā Shilpa Samālochanār Dhārā*, 3. My quotes from Srimani are from the same reprint.
12 Srimani, *Sukshma*, 4–5. Locke's letter of 4.2.74.
13 Locke's difference with the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal over the Economic Museum (1873) forced his resignation. On his death in 1885, the DPI pointedly ignored his contribution to the school (Bagal, *Centenary*, 13–14). Also, Sarkar, 'Henry Hover Locke', *Shilpisaptak*, 13–28. On Griffiths and Ajanta, see above, ch. 2.
14 Srimani, *Sukshma*, 20–8; 35, 45. Rám Ráz, *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus*, London, 1843.
15 Mitter, *Monsters*, 264 (J. Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, London, 1876, was the most influential theorist).
16 Bagal, *Hindu Mela*, 83.
17 Srimani, *Sukshma*, 56.
18 Sarkar, 'Srimani', 37–8.

19 Bagal, *Hindu Mela*, 16. On Mitra and the Photographic Society of India, where he was the treasurer, *The Journal of the Photographic Society of Bengal*, Nos. 1–3, 1857 and *To the Members of the Photographic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1857. Bhadralok criticisms must be seen against the background of the Indigo Rebellion which aroused great passions in the year of the Mutiny.
20 S. Mitra, *Rajendralal Mitra*, Calcutta, 1376 (1969), 23.
21 *Indian Charivari Album*, No. 20, 15.10.75.
22 R. L. Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, I, London, 1881, i–ii.
23 Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, I, 1.
24 Published London, 1884, i–iv. The controversy is discussed in Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*.
25 Fergusson, *Archaeology*, 100.
26 Mitra, *Rajendralal Mitra*, 14–15.
27 Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, iii.
28 Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, 101–2.
29 O. C. Gangoly, *Bhārater Shilpa o Āmār Kathā*, Calcutta, 1969, 22–6. Benjamin West's massive history painting, *Death of Nelson*, contained 124 figures.
30 Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, V, 361–2; VII, 201; VII, 402. Calcutta, 1971–6. On his impact on the West, see below, ch. 7.
31 Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, V, 476.
32 Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, V, 258, 372–3.
33 Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, VII, 202–3.
34 R. Tagore, 'Deshiya Rājya', *RR*, XII, 763.
35 B. Tagore, 'Deyāler Chhabi', reprinted in Acharya and Som, *Bānglā*, 58–9.
36 Tagore, 'Deyāler Chhabi', 9.
37 B. Tagore, 'Robibarmā', 1306 (1899), Acharya and Som, *Bānglā*, 83. This later article remained incomplete at his death.
38 Tagore, B. 'Robibarmā', 60–1.
39 Tagore, 'Robibarmā', 61–5; 'Hindu Deb-debir Chitra', 1300, Acharya and Som, *Bānglā*, 68–70.
40 Tagore, 'Robibarma', 62–5. 'Hindu Deb-debir', 66–8. See above p. 210
41 B. Tagore, 'Dillir Chitrashālikā', 1305, Acharya and Som, *Bānglā*, 72.
42 Tagore, 'Dillir', 73–82.
43 B. Tagore, 'Hindu Deb-debir', 70. Interestingly enough, Hindu Melā of 1868 showed a Jaipur miniature (Bagal, *Hindu Mela*, 9).
44 Tagore, 'Dillir', 77.
45 Tagore, 'Robibarmā', 83.

7. IDEOLOGY OF SWADESHI ART

1 T. B. Macaulay, 'Minute on Education', in T. Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, II, New York, 1963, 49.
2 J. W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society*; Cambridge, 1970; Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*; P. Mitter, 'The Aryan Myth and British Writings on Indian Art and Literature', in Moore-Gilbert, *Literature*. J. Leopold, 'British applications of the Aryan theory of race to India, 1850–70', *The English Historical Review*,

89, Jul. 1974, 578–603.

3 G. Birdwood, *The Industrial Arts*. C. Dewey, 'Image of the Indian Village Community', *Modern Asian Studies*, 6, 291 ff. L. Dumont, 'The Village Community from Munro to Maine', *Religion/Politics and History in India*, Paris, 1970, 112–32. 'Saracenic' architecture chosen for Raj buildings was dictated by the need to stress the Orientalness of the 'empire', Metcalf, *Vision*.

4 Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement*.

5 'The Deeper Significance of the Art Movement in Bengal', *The Dawn Magazine*, 15, 7, Jul. 1912, 13 ff.

6 My own ideas gained a great deal from Robert Evans's paper on 'Nationality in Eastern Europe: perception and definition before 1848', given at the Institute For Advanced Study, Princeton, in 1981. On Irish nationalism, R. L. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600–1972*, London, 1988, on Celtic language and nationalism. He points out that its most fervent advocates were English speakers while Evans shows that Liszt, an ardent Hungarian nationalist, spoke only German. Rather than being a fact, nationalism is a sentiment.

7 E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, London, 1983, 42–3; A. D. Smith, *Nationalism in the 20th Century*, London, 1979. E. Kedourie, *Nationalism*, London, 1966 and *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, London, 1970.

8 Macaulay, 'Minute'.

9 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, 1983, 47. On scholars attached to Fort William, Calcutta and the Bengal Renaissance, D. Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Berkeley, 1969. A classic Marxist study is Susobhan, Sarkar, *On the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1985 edn. On missionaries and the modernisation of the Bengali language, M. A. Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal*, Oxford, 1972.

10 B. Chatterjee, *Kapālkundalā*, in *Bankim Rachanābali* (fiction vol.), Calcutta, 1978, 85–136. The first and last are essay vols. The use of Rousseau in the novel was suggested by the late Pradyot Mukherjee. Anderson, *Communities*, 47.

11 On western literacy of the Indian elite in the three Presidencies, Bengal, Bombay and Madras, and the rise of national consciousness, Seal, *Emergence*, particularly 61–113 and Appendix 1, 355.

12 Quoted in J. A. Fishman, *Language and Nationalism*, London, 1972, 1.

13 Anderson, *Communities*, 13–28. E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1984, 1 ff, on the extent to which traditions were constructed, if not fabricated, to assert certain aspects of national life, from the mid-nineteenth century. Gellner stresses artificiality, while Anderson proposes that communities 'are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (*Nations*, 15). For an acerbic view of nationalism, Kedourie (note 7 above).

14 Gellner, *Nations*, 56–8.

15 *The Dawn Magazine*, 6, 1902–3, 65.

16 Greenberger, *British Image*, 51. On the Victorian equation of physical strength with cultural superiority and the adulation of sportsmanship in public schools, J. M. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public Schools*, Cambridge, 1981. These values influenced adventure novels and

more recently adventure films (Street, *Savage*, and Bolt, *Attitudes*, on Victorian jingoism. On classic Utilitarian criticism of Hinduism, J. Mill, *The History of British India*, 3 vols, London, 1817; A. T. Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India*, London, 1962, 145–57, on Grant's attacks on Hinduism and his efforts as a Company official on behalf of missionaries in India. Rosselli, 'Self-image', 121–48.

17 Prinsep, *Imperial India*, 89. Greenberger, *British Image*, 77 and 48ff. on F. Anstey, 49–50, 71–2; *The Indian Charivari*, 15.11.72, 23 and *passim* on the Bengalis.

18 Rosselli, 'Self-image', 121–48. On degeneration in Bengal, T. Raychaudhuri, 60, 115, 134, 160. On the feeling of degeneration as a global phenomenon at the *fin de siècle*, D. Pick, 'The Degenerating Genius', *History Today*, 42, April 1992, 17–22.

19 S. Banerjea, 'The Study of Indian History', in E. Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia*, 225–44. On history, see Hegel in E. H. Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History*, Oxford, 1969. A. Roy, *Rajendralal Mitra*, Calcutta, 1969, 14. *Delhi Sketch Book*, 4, 1853, 31.

20 Apart from Bankim, two famous nationalist novels, *Mahārāstra Jiban Prabhāt* (The Dawn of the Maharastra Nation), 1878 and *Rājput Jiban Sandhyā* (Twilight of the Rajputs), 1879, were written by Ramesh Dutt, an early Indian ICS who retired as lecturer at University College, London. The first critic of economic imperialism (*Economic History of India*, London, 1906–13), the two novels (fiction vol. *Ramesh Rachanābali*, Calcutta, 1970, 151–326) were intended for bhadralok readership. The play, *Shirāj ud-Daulāh*, based on the last Bengal ruler who died at British hands, was by Girish Ghosh and on the same theme, *Palāshir Prāntar* (The battlefield of Plassey), was by Nabin Sen.

21 J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, London, 1919, 21–7. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, London, 1954, 4–8 on the re-creation of ancient India by European Orientalists. R. Schwab, *La Renaissance orientale*, Paris, 1950, on the impact of the orient on the West, especially on the Romantics.

22 N. C. Chaudhuri, *Scholar Extraordinary: The Life of . . . Max Müller*, London, 1974, 2, 123–46; 287–343. On his reconstruction of ancient Hindu civilistion, 318 ff. and on Dayananda, 327. On Müller's work on the Ṛg Veda, Neufeldt, *R. W. Friedrich Max Müller and the Ṛg Veda*, 1980. C. Weinberger-Thomas, 'Les mystères du Veda: Spéculations sur la texte sacré des anciens brames au Siècle des Lumières', *Puruṣārtha*' (1983), 177–231 on the impact of the Vedas on the Enlightenment.

23 Smith, *Nationalism*. P. Mitter, 'Rammohun Roy et le nouveau langage du monothéisme', *L'Impensable polythéisme*, ed. F. Schmidt, Paris, 1988, 257–97. B. Ghosh on *Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar*, New Delhi, 1973, a popular but useful book on the great reformer, who fought for the remarriage of widows. Arnold in A. H. Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, London, 1963.

24 Poliakov, *Aryan Myth*, 186 on Herder.

25 Anderson, *Communities*, 33, 73. J. M. Crook, *The Greek Revival*, London, 1972. K. Clark, *The Gothic Revival*, London, 1950; D. Rosenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, London, 1987. Foucault is the most influential exponent

of the notion of the archaeology of the past and of abrupt ruptures in the historical continuum.

26 B. S. Cohn (unpublished paper), 'The Transformation of Objects into Artifacts', 4).

27 B. Chatterjee, *Ānandamath* in *Bankim Rachanābali* (novels). T. Raychaudhuri shows that the initial version serialised in a magazine was critical of the British but pressure was brought on him to tone it down (*Europe*, 103–218). But its message was not missed by the revolutionary, Aurobindo Ghosh, whose *Bhawani Mandir* drew upon the novel (see above, ch. 3, note 142, and below, ch. 8, note 136). I am grateful to Rosalind O'Hanlon for letting me consult her paper in which she argues that it was essential for the Raj to set up a uniform, clearly-defined tradition if the administrators were to appeal to it in times of dispute in heterogenous India.

28 On language and world-view, B. Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1956. A. K. Ghosh, ed., *Madhusudan Rachanābali*, Calcutta, 1973. On Tagore's interest in Romantic poets, *RR*, IV, 857–61, 864, 870–1; X, 72, 611, 942; XI, 42, 51; XIII, 617–23, 821–3, 974–9, XIV, 341, 579 and *passim*.

29 Evolutionary theories, used in nineteenth-century art histories to explain artistic progress globally as epitomised by German universal histories of art, went back to Vasari, the father of the Classical canon. Another factor may be that stylistic differences between European naturalist art and non-naturalist traditions that follow a 'conceptual' mode of art are so distinctive as to be easily identifiable, a difference more elusive in literature, where the subject matter is prominent. I am grateful to John Burrow for his suggestion of competing western canons in literature that challenged Classical monopoly. Yet, the English literary canon may have had an insidious and equally lasting effect on Indians through the control of the curriculum (Viswanathan, *Masks*; see above, ch. 1, note 12).

30 See below, ch. 8.

31 M. Archer, *Patna Painting*, London, 1947, 33 and *passim*.

32 E. Boyd, *Ireland's Literary Renaissance*, London, 1968, on Dublin mystics. W. E. Hall, *Shadowy Heroes: Irish Literature of the 1890s*, Syracuse, 1980, 42–3; 59; on Theosophical Society and Irish poets (143–5). On Tagore and Yeats, M. Lago, *Imperfect Encounter*, London, 1972, 21 and *passim*. S. Hay, *Asian Ideals of East and West*, Cambridge (Mass.), 47–8; 130. Mme Blavatsky was a complex figure, unconventional, a single woman travelling around the world in an era when women's activities were circumscribed (there is no good biography but see C. J. Ryan, *H. P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement*, Pasadena, 1955; V. Hanson, *H. P. Blavatsky and the Secret Doctrine*, Madras, 1971). On Besant, note 37 below.

33 J. H. Cousins, *The Renaissance in India*, Madanapalle, 1918. K. Okakura, *The Ideals of the East*, London, 1903. On Coomaraswamy, Okakura's letter of 25.1.1911 to Coomaraswamy wishing to meet him and a note by Coomaraswamy regretting that they never met (Coomaraswamy Papers, Box 46, folder 8. Published with permission of the Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries).

34 Hall, *Heroes*, xi. On Yeats one must be cautious, for reasons behind his

fascination with the East were complex. However the poet did equate the nature of Irish and eastern societies, both victims of European empires (R. Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, London, 1954).

35 E. P. Thompson, *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary*, London, 1977, Part I, chs 1 and 2; Part IV and 692–8. On aesthetic critique of the Industrial Revolution, A. Bøe, *Gothic Revival to Functional Form*, Oslo, 1957; more recently, Gombrich, *A Sense of Order*, 17–55, especially Victorian connection between design and morality. On society in Britain in the last century, J. L. and B. Hammond, *The Bleak Age*, London, 1947.

36 On the history of Theosophy, Farquhar, *Movements*, 208–91. Nethercot, *Annie Besant*, 53 on Theosophy and science.

37 Nethercot, *Annie Besant*, 15–32; 62–73 and *passim*. G. Best, *Annie Besant*, London, 1928. A. Besant, *An Autobiography*, London, 1893.

38 V. Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, London, 1910, 28–9.

39 Farquhar, *Movements*, 202. R. Johnson, *A History of World's Columbian Exhibition*, IV, Chicago, 1898, 225 ff. on the Indian contingent. Calling Ramakrishna and Vivekananda the Mozart and Beethoven of the spiritual world, Romain Rolland wrote, 'I have chosen two men who have won my regard because with incomparable charm and power they have realised this splendid symphony of the universal soul' (*The Life of Ramakrishna*, tr. E. F. Malcolm-Smith, Calcutta, 1929; *Life of Vivekananda*, tr. Malcolm-Smith, Calcutta, 1931). Schwab, *Renaissance*, 198, 451, 475 on Vivekananda and the West.

40 B. Foxe, *Long Journey Home*, London, 1975.

41 E. B. Havell, *The Basis For Artistic and Industrial Revival in India*, Madras, 1912; Havell, *Basis*, 56; private papers (IOL).

42 Havell, 'Art and Education', *Essays* (see note 45 below), 87.

43 A. Briggs, ed., *William Morris, Selected Writings and Designs*, London, 1962, 84.

44 E. B. Havell, *JRSA*, 985, 58, 4 Feb. 1910, 275; on Burns' contrary view, see above, ch. 2, no. 69.

45 Havell, *Basis*, 13; 'The Revival of Indian Handicraft' (1901), *Essays in Indian Art, Industry and Education*, Madras, 1907, 44–56; *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, London, 1908, last section.

46 On Morris and steam power, P. Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, London, 1980, 14. Havell, *Essays on Indian Art . . .*, 32. A. Tagore, *Gharoā* (*Abanindra Rachanābali*), IV, Calcutta, 1979, 66 ff.

47 Havell, 'Revival of Handicraft', *Essays*, 59 on P. C. Ghosh, editor of *Indian Mechanic*; Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement*, 101–2; 105; 120. On Hindu Melā see above, ch. 5.

48 Davey, *Arts*, 23.

49 *The Studio*, 27, 15.10.1902, 33.

50 *Gesamtkunstwerk* (a total work of art) aims at a complete integration of different art forms – painting, words, drama, poetry, music – so none is dominant, as in Wagner's operas (*Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms*, London, 1988). On the revival of public murals in Britain, Helen Smith, *Decorative Painting in the Domestic Interior in England and Wales c. 1850–1890*, New York, 1984.

51 *Indian Sculpture and Painting; The Ideals of Indian Art*, London, 1911, two of

the pioneering ones.

52 Havell, *Basis for . . . Revival*, 56.

53 Havell, 'Revival of handicraft', *Essays*, 24; 'Art and Education', *Essays*, 110 ff; *Basis*, 55. R. G. Irving, *Indian Summer*, Yale, 1981.

54 Havell, *Basis*, 56.

55 Havell, *Basis*, 68, Havell, 'Open Letter to Educated Indians', *Bengalee*, 4 Aug. 1903 (album of cuttings in Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan).

56 Seal, *Emergence*, 114–30 on job prospects; Raychaudhuri, *Europe*, 4–6 and *passim*, on the intellectual aspects of the new western learning. A. Basu, *Growth of Education and Political Developments in India*, 1974, 100–146 on English education in the Presidencies.

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69 Nivedita, *Works*, 7, 15. On Birdwood, letter to Havell, 7 Apr. 1910 (Havell Collection. IOL).

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71 Quoted in Foxe, *Journey*, 198.

72 Nivedita, *Works*, 58, 85.

73 Nivedita, *Works*, 18–20.

74 Nivedita, *Works*, 5, 77–8, 80–1.

75 Nivedita, *Works*, 6–7, 9, 10.

76 Nivedita, *Works*, 8–9.

77 Nivedita, *Works*, 6, 11.

78 Nivedita, *Works*, 12–13.

79 Nivedita, *Works*, 6, 7.

80 Puvis de Chavannes', *Works*, 85; 'Guido Reni', 93; 'Richter, Queen Louise', 91.

81 Nivedita, *Works*, 16, 57–60. *Modern Review*, 2, 1, Jul. 1907, 100; 'Notes on Pictures: Madonna and Child', *Works*, 88–9 on P. A. J. Dagnan-Bouveret.

82 *Prabāsi*, Yr. 7, 6, 1907, Dhurandhar (frontispiece).

83 'J. F. Millet, Angelus', Nivedita, *Works*, 86. One of the most popular works of the late nineteenth century, its pietism was carried over into Van Gogh's work, for instance.

84 W. Lübke, *Outlines of the History of Art*, II, London, 1904, 454. Nivedita who knew his work (*Works*, 13), on Breton, 92.

85 Coomaraswamy to Rothenstein, 23.6.1910, bMS Eng 1148 (320). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

86 Press comment on the cover of Coomaraswamy's *Essays in National Idealism*, Colombo, 1911. A. Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee*, London, 1985, 140–7; 264–5.

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89 Coomaraswamy, 'A Prince of Swadeshists', *Young Behar*, II, 5, Nov. 1910, 1 ff. Curzon quoted in Davies, *Splendours*, 245.

90 *Art and Swadeshi*, Madras, 1912, 7 ff. *Essays*, Preface, 11, 76. In 'Swadeshi True or False' (*Essays*, Preface, 9–23) the same point is made.

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93 *Essays*, 63.

94 M. Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*, London, 1973, 117–18. J. M. Rosenfield, 'Western-Style Painting in the Early Meiji Period and Its Critics' in Shively, *Tradition*, 181–200.

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97 Hay, *Ideals*, 40.

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100 F. Tönnies, *Community and Association*, London, 1974. Christoff, Aksakov, 435–6. Birdwood in *JRSA*, 57, 1909, 642.

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102 R. P. Dua, *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War on Indian Politics*, Delhi, 1966, 22. K. Okakura, *The Ideals*. Y. Horiyoka, *The life of Kakuzo*, Tokyo,

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103 S. N. Tagore, 'Okakura Kakuzo', *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, 25, Nos. 3 and 4 (Silver Jubilee Issue), 1960, 50–60.

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107 Nivedita, *Works*, III, 92.

108 Rosenfield, 'Western', 203–13.

109 Okakura, *Letters to a Friend*, Santiniketan, n.d.; *Collected English Writings*, I, Tokyo, 1984, xiii–iv.

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8. HOW THE PAST WAS SALVAGED BY *SWADESHI* ARTISTS

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12 *Cat . . . Maharaja Tagore*, ii.
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17 A. Tagore, *Jorāsānkor Dhāre*, 9–10. R. Tagore, 'Religion of an Artist', *Rabindranath Tagore On Art and Aesthetics*, New Delhi 1961, 40. On Tagore as a product of Brahmo culture, D. Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj*.
18 *Jorāsānkor*, 22; 35–6.
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21 J. P. Gangooly, 'Early Reminiscences', 16. *Jorāsānkor*, 53, 61; *Āpan Kathā*, 28.
22 Tagore, *Āpan* 26; *Gharoā*, 65; Pratima, Debi, *Smriti Chitra*, Calcutta, 1359 (1952) 64–5; on *Bālak*, see above, ch. 2.
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27 See *Chitrāngadā*, Calcutta, 28 Bhādra 1299 (dedication). Tagore, *Jorāsānkor*, 152. Frances Martindale's hand-painted illustrations belonged to Sumitendranath and Shyamasree Tagore. On Balendranath, see above, ch. 6.
28 Gangooly, *Reminiscences*, 21.
29 Gangooly, *Reminiscences*, 20–1. *Sisir Abhisār* in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (Abanindra No.), pl. 1 and B. B. Mukherjee, 'A Chronology of Abanindranath's Paintings', 119–37.
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31 Tagore, *Jorāsānkor*, 155.
32 *Centenary of Calcutta Art School*, 22.
33 Havell, 'The New Indian School of Painting', *The Studio*, 44, 1908, 111.
34 *Centenary*, 22.
35 P. Chakravarty, 'Bānglār Bāstab-bādi Shilpadhārā o Atul Basu', *Chatuskon*,

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36 *Centenary*, 38.
37 Vivekananda, *Works*, VII, 203.
38 *Centenary*, 29. See above, ch. 7, on nationalism as a conscious creation.
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41 *Centenary*, 26. For a glimpse of the collection, see Havell, *Indian Sculpture . . .* (1908), pls. LIV–LVIII, LX–LXVI, LXVIII–LXXII.
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43 Havell, 'Some Notes', *Studio*, 26.
44 Tagore, *Jorāsānkor*, 157–8.
45 *Centenary*, 26. See also Havell, *Indian Sculpture*, pl. LXI, p. 212. The work is at present in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.
46 *Centenary*, 24; Sarkar, *Bhārāter*, 8.
47 Havell, 'Some Notes', *Studio*, 25–33.
48 *Centenary*, 26–7. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Rajput Painting*, Oxford, 1916.
49 P. Brown, in G. Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi*, Calcutta, 1903, 458.
50 RRV, 1904; *Times of India*, 25.3.1904; 8.3.1907.
51 On Balen Tagore, see above, ch. 6.
52 Pratima Debi, *Smriti Chitra*, 69–70.
53 Brown, *Indian Painting*, 459.
54 Nivedita, 'Havell on Indian Painting', *Works*, III, 36–7.
55 A. Tagore, *Jorāsānkor*, 155–8.
56 *The Pioneer*, 3 Jan. 1903, quoted in *Prabāsi*, Nos. 10–11, 1309–10, 380.
57 B. B. Mukherjee, *Ādhunik Shilpa Shiksā*, Calcutta, 1972, 30. A. Tagore, *Jorāsānkor*, 132, 134. Pratima Debi, *Smritichitra*, 70 quotes her uncle that when line is unable to cope with imagination, colour becomes necessary, as it helps delineate light and shade more effectively (which explains Abanindranath's own atmospheric approach). On Dwarkanath's furniture (80). S. Chaudhuri, *Abanindra . . .*, 171.
58 Rosenfield, 'Western', 201–8.
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62 *Rūpam*, April 1922, 39–42 (see Pl. I).
63 Rosenfield, 'Western', 204; S. Chaudhuri, *Abanindra Nandan* (see above, ch. 7, n. 111), 190.
64 *Studio*, 1905; *Kokka*, 1908; Havell, *Indian Sculpture*, pl.; A. Tagore, *The Rubayy'at of Omar Khayy'am*, London, 1910 (with 12 illustr.).
65 On Arai Campo, S. Bandopadhaya, *Rabindra Chitrakalā: Rabindra Sāhityer Patabhumikā*, Santiniketan, 1388 (1981), 258–63.
66 J. H. and M. E. Cousins, *We Two Together*, Madras, 1950, 353.
67 Cousins and Cousins, *We Two Together*, 353–4.
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73 Nivedita, *Works*, III, 60.

74 Havell, 'New School', *Studio*, 44, 1908, 115.

75 Mandal, *Nandalal*, I, 229; Mitra, *Haldar*, Pl. 1 (*Mother India Awakened*) A. Tagore, *Gharoa*, 68; G. Bhowmik, 'Vigñānāchārya Jagadishchandrer Shilpānurāg', *Sundaram*, Yr. 3, No. 2, 1365, 170.

76 On Suren Ganguly, Mandal, I, 72–8. *Centenary*, 32; on Asit's family background, M. Mitra, unpaginated intr. *Asit Kumar Haldar*, Delhi, 1961 and information supplied by his son, Adhish Haldar; also G. Haldar, *Shilpi Asit Kumar Haldar: jiban o karma'*, *Nibedito*, Yr. 5, No 4, Chaitra, 1398, 344–9 and Yr 6, No 1, Ashad, 1399, 59–64; on Nandalal's early life, Mandal, I (interview by author with artist); V. Sitaramiah, in *Venkatappa* Delhi, 1968, i–ii. J. Appasamy, *Kshitindranath Majumdar*, Delhi, 1967; not much is known about Sailen Dey and Hakim Mohammad Khan.

77 *Centenary*, 31–2. *Journal of ISOA 75th Anniversary*, n.s., 12–13, 1981–3, 148 gives a different name, Bangiya Kala Parisad.

78 Smith, *Decorative Painting*.

79 Gen. Report on Education, Bengal, 1897–8, 97; 1899–1900, 119; 1900–2, 42. See above, ch. 7, note 41.

80 Rev. of Education, 2nd Quinquennium, 1901–2, 42; Rev. of Ed., 1900–1, 29.

81 Havell, *Sculpture*, 267–8. Gen. Report Ed. Bengal 1902–3, 32; Havell, 'New School', *The Studio*, 44, June–Sept. 1908, 115.

82 Havell, *Sculpture*, 257–60.

83 Havell, *Sculpture*, 257–60; the reception of 'Kacha' among enemies of orientalism below, ch. 9.

84 Nivedita, *Works*, III, 58.

85 Nivedita, *Works*, III, 85, and 33, 59.

86 Geddes, *Bose*, 246.

87 *Centenary*, 26–7. Havell, *JRSA*, 58, 1910, 276–7.

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91 Mukhopadhaya, *Ādhunik Shilpa Shikshā*, 21.

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93 Havell, *Indian Sculpture*, 256.

94 P. Mandal, *Bhārat*, 68.

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97 Havell, 'Some Notes', *Studio*, 26.
98 See above, chs 1 and 2; Dhurandhar, *Kalamandirantil* (ch. 2, note 28 above), 77; M. Dey, *My Pilgrimage to Ajanta and Bagh*, London, 1925. *Prabāsi*, Yr. 1, No. 1, Baisākh, 1308, 10–19.
99 Quoted in Nivedita, *Works*, III, 35; *Burlington Magazine* reports on Herringham, 1910 (see below, note 102).
100 A. Tagore, *Jorāsānkor*, 133–4; *The Dawn Magazine*, March 1912, 67.
101 *Dawn Magazine*, March 1912, 67; P. Mandal, *Bhārat*, 167–73.
102 Nivedita, 'The Ancient Abbey of Ajanta', *Complete Works*, IV, 45–56 (reprinted from *Modern Review*). *Dawn*, March 1912, 68. C. Herringham, 'The Frescoes of Ajanta', *The Burlington Magazine*, 17, Apr.–Sept. 1910, 136.
103 Herringham, 'Frescoes'; on ISOA exhibitions, *Dawn*, April 1912, 23–6. Bhowmik, 'Vignānāchārya' (see above, note 75), 171.
104 A. Tagore, *Jorāsānkor*, 113.
105 Proceedings of the inaugural meeting (ISOA archives) and *ISOA Short History, Rules and Regulations*, Calcutta, 1959–60. Those attending were Rampini, Woodroffe, Dudley Myers, C. F. Larmour, Abanindra, Lt. Col. Philpott, N. Blount, E. Meyer, A. Stephen, W. Garth, Gaganendra, H. Risley, W. Gregory, Suren Tagore, J. Chaudhuri, Samarendra Tagore, J. P. Gangooly, Justice Holmwood, H. G. Graves. Aban and Blount were Honorary Joint Secretaries-cum-Treasurers. The news of the meeting in *The Studio*, 43, Jan.–Apr. 1908, 163.
106 E. B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, 262 (ch. 'The Future of Indian Art'). For the significance of the work, see Mitter, *Monsters*, ch. 6.
107 'Eastern Art and Western Critics', *Edinburgh Review*, 112, Oct. 1910. Havell's letter to Coomaraswamy 26.12.1908 (Box 46, Folder 8; for full acknowledgement to Princeton Libraries, see ch. 7, note 33, above).
108 Havell, 'The New School', *Studio*, 1908, 108.
109 Havell, 'New School', 115.
110 Nivedita, *Works*, III, 51–2.
111 Nivedita, *Works*, III, 21.
112 Nivedita, *Works*, III, 23.
113 W. Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, 1932, 229–31 and the early chs. On Ashbee, see above, ch. 7, note 86; Havell to Rothenstein 4.5.1909 (bMS Eng 1148 (680). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University).
114 Burns, 'The Function of Schools of Art', *JRSA*, 1908, 629–41. Havell, 'Art Administration', *JRSA*, 1910, 273–96. Lecture at the Royal Asiatic Society by Vincent Smith on 11.1.1910 (reported in *The Statesman*, 2.6.1910).
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116 Coomaraswamy to Rothenstein, 22.12.1909 (bMS Eng 1148 (320). For full acknowledgement, see note 113 above). Havell, 'Art Adm.', 285.
117 Havell to Rothenstein, 15.2.1910 (bMS Eng 1148 (680). For full acknowledgement see note 113 above).
118 *The Times*, 28.2.1910.
119 *The Dawn Magazine*, April 1912, 21.

120 Havell to Rothenstein, 27.2.10, 2.3.10 (bMS Eng 1148 (680). For acknowledgement, see note 113 above); Coomaraswamy to Rothenstein, 27.3.1915 (bMS Eng 1148 (320). For acknowledgement see note 113 above).

121 India Society Minute Book, 29.9.1910 (IOL); Havell to Rothenstein 15.2.1910 (bMS Eng 1148 (680); for acknowledgement see note 113 above).

122 A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Essays in Indian Nationalism*, Madras, 1911, 81. Havell to Coomaraswamy, 22.9.1908 (see note 107 above and ch. 7, note 33, above) mentioning Gagan's letter to the Sinhalese and possible funding for him. A. Coomaraswamy, 'The Modern School of Indian Painting', *Journal of Indian Art*, 15, 120, 1911, 69. On 1911 exhibition, *The Dawn Magazine*, Apr. 1912, 23, 69. Coomaraswamy, *Rajput Painting* 2 vols, London, 1916. In 1910, he lectured on it in Calcutta (Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy*, 87).

123 See ch. 10, note 15 on Fry, a violent anti-naturalist.

124 Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, London, 1932, 232; Coomaraswamy to Rothenstein 5.10.1910; 7.7.1910; 15.9.1910 (bMS Eng 1148 (320). Acknowledgement note 113 above).

125 Rosenfield, 'Western', 213; C. Sehanābish, *Rabindranāth o Biplabi Samāj*, Calcutta, 1985, 8–39 and *passim*.

126 Havell to Rothenstein, 6.8.1910 (bMS Eng 1148 (680); see note 113 above); Rothenstein, *Men*, on Tagore mansion, 249.

127 Coomaraswamy, *Indian Drawings*, London, 1910; the collection went to the Kasturbhais of Ahmedabad. Gaganendranath seems to have acquired some of the works from Patna artists (from Iswari Prasad?).

128 Havell to Coomaraswamy 22.9.1908 (see n. 107 and ch. 7 n. 33 above); Nivedita to Havell 7.4.1910 (IOL); Havell to Rothenstein 6.8.1910, 25.6, 1912, 27.6.1912 (bMS Eng 1148 (680), see n. 113 above). U. Das Gupta, 'Letters: Abanindranath to Havell', *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, 46, nos. 1–4, 1980–1 (Ramkinkar-Binode Behari Special Number), 208–29.

129 Mandal, *Nandalāl*, I, 71; *Centenary*, 34–5, 39; *Statesman*, 2.6.1910. On P. Brown's collection for the school, *Introductory Guide to the Art Section of the Indian Museum*, Calcutta, 1916; *Annual Report of the Working of the Government Art Gallery, Calcutta (1917–1918)*, Calcutta, 1918.

130 Havell to Rothenstein 3.5.1911 (bMS Eng 1148 (680). See also note 113 above).

131 Havell to Rothenstein 5.5.1911 (bMS Eng 1148 (680). See note 113 above). *Centenary*, 37–9. Abanindranath to Havell, 2.3.1911, 8.6.1911 in Das Gupta, 'Letters', 216–20.

132 T. Mirium (IOL) to Havell 11.5.1911.

133 Sarkar, *Bhārater*, 12.

134 Woodroffe, *Kokka*, 1908; art instruction at ISOA, Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 163.

135 *Centenary*, 37–9. *Dawn*, Mar. 1912, 66 on works sent abroad.

136 'Indian Art Exhibitions, 1908–12', *Dawn Magazine*, Apr. 1912, 21–7. 'Indian Art Exhibition in Calcutta: Movement in Favour of Indian Art', *Dawn*, March 1912, 63–4. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (see above, ch. 3, n. 142), 168. On the investigation of terrorists, *The Rowlatt Report* (Report of the Sedition Committee), Calcutta, 1919; Gandhi's launching of the Rowlatt Satyagraha (Brown, *Gandhi*, 160–89).

137 Dundas (Ronaldshay and Zetland), *Essayez*, London, 1956, 124 ff. *Indian Art and Letters*, I, 1, 1925, 5; IV, 2, 1930, 76.

138 *Dawn*, March 1912, 64–6.
139 Dundas, *Essayez*, 124.
140 *Dawn*, March 1912, 65; April 1912, 22. Lord Carmichael's Indian art collection, lost when the ship *Medina* was torpedoed by a German U-Boat in 1917, was salvaged and auctioned by Sotheby's in 1988: *The Sunday Times*, 1.5.1988, c. 7. The Abanindranath painting was not among them.
141 *Dawn*, Apr. 1912, 22 which also mentions Screen 15 devoted to oriental art. *Modern Review*, 6, 3, Sept. 1909, 307.
142 *Times of India*, 8.3.1907.
143 *Modern Review*, 6, 3, Sept. 1909, 307.
144 *Prabāsi*, Yr. 9, 6 Āsvin, 1316, 460.
145 *Dawn*, Apr. 1912, 23. *The Statesman* Special Feature is kindly supplied by Adhish Haldar. Unfortunately the actual date is missing except it is the second ISOA exhibition.
146 Nivedita, 'Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art', *Works*, 54.
147 Nivedita, 'Ahalyā', *Works*, 71, 54.
148 Nivedita, *Works*, 'Exhibition', 55.
149 Nivedita, *Works*, 'Exhibition', 55–6.
150 *Dawn*, Mar. 1912, 68; Apr. 1912, 24–6.
151 *Evening Standard*, 16.10.1911.
152 Havell to Rothenstein 15.2.1910 (bMS Eng 1148 (680); see note 113 above). Abanindranath to Coomaraswamy 11.11.1907 (Box 47, Folder 8; for acknowledgement see ch. 7, note 33); S. Basu, *Shilpāchārya Abanindranāth*, Calcutta, 1975, 84.
153 Nivedita, *Works*, 73.
154 A. Coomaraswamy, 'The Modern School of Indian Painting' (Introduction to Empire Exhibition Catalogue), *JIAI*, 15, 1913, 67–9.
155 Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 279–80. A. Karpelès, 'The Calcutta School of Painting', *Rūpam*, No. 13/14, Jan.–Jun. 1923, 2.
156 Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 280. *Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art 1915*, Calcutta, 1916, 24.
157 M. Hollebecque, '"Le réveil artistique de l'inde" A. Tagore et les peintres de l'école de Calcutta', *L'Art Décoratif*, XVI année, no. 200, Feb. 1914, 65–78.
158 Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 283. On Rabindranath, K. Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, London, 1962. *Catalogue of Paintings of the New Calcutta School* lent by the ISOA, Apr.–May 1914. Victoria & Albert Museum Indian Section Publ. (217 works submitted).
159 Gangoly, 'The New Indian School of Painting', JIAI, 17, 1914.
160 *The Athenaeum* quoted in ISOA Exhibition 1915, 20–1.
161 *The Daily News*, in *ISOA . . . 1915*, 24.
162 *The Sunday Times*, in *ISOA . . . 1915*, 46a.
163 *ISOA . . . 1915*, 'Screen A'.
164 *ISOA . . . 1915*, Screens E, F, K. L.
165 *The Indian Society of Oriental Art Exhibition of Modern Indian Paintings* at the Young Men's Indian Association, Madras 19 Feb.–4 March, 1916, Madras, 1916. *The Commonweal* (12.6.1914).
166 J. H. Cousins, *The Renaissance in India*, Madanpalle, 1918, 62.
167 Cousins, *We Two*, 260; 43 ff.
168 Cousins, *We Two*, 262.

169 Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 276–7.
170 Cousins, *We Two*, 415.
171 O. C. Gangoly, 'Modern Indian Painting', *International Studio*, 79, 324, May 1924, 81–91.
172 Cousins, *We Two*, 431.
173 Cousins, 'European Appreciation of Indian Painting', *Roopa-Lekha*, 1, 1, 1929, 13. Two years later Rabindranath showed at the Athenée Gallery with much greater fanfare, Mitter, 'Tagore's Generation Views His Art', *Rabindranath Tagore in Perspective*, Santiniketan, 1990, 144.
174 Cousins, 'European Appreciation', 12–4; Cousins, *We Two*, 328.
175 Information on him, see above, ch. 3, p. 99–100; source: Rasheed Araeen for additional material. Having fallen out with the Pakistani authorities, the couple came to a sad end (B. Sarwar, 'Aiwan-e-Rifat: restored to its rightful place', *The Star*, Thurs. 4.2.1985, iv).
176 Cousins, *We Two*, 320.
177 I am grateful to the artist's son for details of his life. See also R. M. Rawal, *Mari Chitra Srishti (My Art World)*, with 24 illustrations.
178 On Nandalal and Haripura Congress, see above, ch. 1; Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*, 83–122 and *passim*.
179 S. J. Bhatt, *Kanu Desai*, n.d. biography of artist who became an art director of Hindi films from Bombay. Artist's son is the informant, and interview with Kanu Desai.
180 Information provided by artist's son, Arif Rahman Chughtai, head of Chughtai Museum Trust, Lahore, to whom I am deeply grateful. I am also in Marcella Nesom's debt for allowing me to use her thesis, especially on artistic sources of Chughtai (M. Nesom, 'Abdur Rahman Chughtai: A Modern South Asian Artist', Ann Arbor, 1984, Univ. Microfilms Internat.). The artist's Urdu memoir, 'My Pictures are in my eyes', is translated by Firdaus Bashir. *Rūpam*, Nos. 13–14, Jan.–Jun 1923, 38, calls him a pupil of Gupta.
181 *Indian Daily News* (23.2.1921); *Rūpam*, 1923, 17. Chughtai memoir. On Morley-Minto Act, Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, London, 1989, 140–2. Letter to Abanindranath in Rabindra Bharati University. *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Fine Arts*, Lahore, 1920.
182 Memoir. *Chughtai's Paintings*, Lahore, n.d., Pl. 2 on Jahanara. On Gangoly, see below, ch. 9.
183 On Pirali Tagores, Basu, *Shilpāchārya*, 218; P. Debi, *Smriti*, 92. On Gangoly, see below p. 353.
184 Cousins, *Chughtai's Paintings*, 9–10.
185 Chughtai, *Memoir*.
186 M. Iqbal, *Muraqqa i-Chughtai*, Lahore, 1928, unpaginated.

9. WESTERNISERS AND ORIENTALISTS: PUBLIC BATTLE OF STYLES

1 Cousins, *We Two*, 262.
2 Cousins, *We Two*, 264. Venkatappa and Nandalal are discussed in my work in preparation.
3 Coomaraswamy, *Modern Review*, 6, 3, 1909, 301; Nivedita, *Works*, 58.

4 These versions of *The Music Party* are inspired by a Calcutta Art Gallery nineteenth-century painting from the Hill States, reproduced in Havell, *Sculptures*, 69, and described by him as a modern painting. Yet another version was printed in *The Studio* (1903).
5 A. Bowness, 'Introduction' in *The Pre-Raphaelites*, catalogue of exhibition at Tate Gallery, 7 March–28 May 1984, 20 and *passim*.
6 Hollebecque, *L'Art*.
7 Havell, *Sculptures*, 263.
8 *Modern Indian Artists*, I (on K. N. Majumdar, ed. O. C. Ganguly), 22 plates; II, (on Asit Haldar, ed. J. Cousins), 28 plates.
9 Sister Nivedita, *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* (completed by A. K. Coomaraswamy), London, 1913. V. C. Scott O'Connor, *The Charm of Kashmir*, London, 1920. R. Tagore, *Gitānjali*, London, 1918.
10 c.f. Abanindranath's *Siddhas* (Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, pl. LXXIV) with Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Monna Vanna* (Tate Gallery); *Modern Indian Artists*, see above, note 8.
11 Gangoly, 'Swadeshi Chitra', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 6, 2, 1313 (1906), 112.
12 Bagal, *Rāmānanda*, 123 quoting *Prabāsi*, Paush, 1350, 262. A. Tagore, 'Sangjojan', *Abanindra Rachanābali*, 392 on Ramananda.
13 Havell to Rothenstein, 25.6.1912 on drawing books for Indian students. Percy Brown as chairman of the Government Art Committee was visiting Britain and Havell asked Rothenstein to meet him but if that was impossible, 'explain why such trash as Chatterjee's books is accepted as complying with government notification asking for books of "Indian design"'. In a letter (23.5.1912) Havell mentions plans to introduce standard drawing books and suggests that his primer (Macmillan) be used. On 27.6.1912 he marshalled Walter Crane, Lethaby and (illegible)'s support to inform Brown on behalf of the India Society that it was watching his 'game' for allowing 'Chatterjee's trash to be put on the list pro tem'. The strong guess is that these are Chatterjee's Albums, letters 23.5.1912, 25.6.1912, 27.6.1912, bMS Eng 1148 (680); for full acknowledgement see ch. 8, note 113, above.
14 A selection from *Prabāsi*.
15 *Prabāsi*, Yr. 3, 2, 1310, 61.
16 *Bhārati*, Yr. 29, 7, 1312, 655; Yr. 33, 1, 1316, 51.
17 See *Sāhitya* between 1317–20.
18 O. C. Gangoly, 'Chitre Darshan', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 4, 1, 1311, 8–13. On Watts, Wood, *Dreamers*, 81–105, especially on Watts dressed as a monk who believed in plain living and high thinking. On Winckelmann, Gombrich, *A Sense of Order*, 17–32, where he discusses art and morality in connection with decoration.
19 Gangoly, 'Uroper Prāchin Juger Chitra', Prabāsi, Yr. 5, 10, 1312, 603–7. Nivedita, *Works*, 85–93. Lübke, History of Art, II, 454 on Millet, which influenced Nivedita. See above, ch. 7, for art and morality and on Raphael, below, p. 355.
20 'Barttamān Sankhyār Chitra', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 2, 2, 1309–10, 379–80; See above, ch. 8, p. 285 on *The Studio*, 1902, 1905, and 1908. Prabāsi, Yr. 7, 6, 1314, 325; Yr. 7, 7, 1314, frontispiece (Abhisār): quote from 10th *śloka* Varṣāvarṇanam (Kālīdāsa).

21 'Ajantā', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 1, 1, 1308, 13–14; for second article see note 22 below.
22 O. C. Gangoly, 'Ajantā Guhāi Dui Din', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 8, 4, 1315, 455, Gangoly, 'Swadeshi banām Bideshi Chitra', Yr. 6, 10, 1313, 538–42.
23 Gangoly, 'Ajantā', 456.
24 O. C. Gangoly, 'The New School of Indian Painting', JIAI, 17, 1916, 48.
25 A. Haldar, 'Chitra Shilper Bichār', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 16, 1(6), Asvin, 1323, 561–3.
26 Gangoly, 'Ajantā Guhāi Dui Din', 456. *Prabāsi*, Yr. 6, 2, 1313, 109–12.
27 Barrell, *Political Theory*, 39.
28 P. Mandal, *Nandalāl*, I, 68.
29 *Bhārati*, Yr. 27, 2, 1310, 129; Yr. 27, 5, 1310, 437–50.
30 *Bhārati*, Yr. 30, 1, 1313, 61–9.
31 *Bhārati*, Yr. 33, 3, 1316, 196.
32 *Modern Review*, I, 3, 1907, 392–6; 'Shilpe Tridhārā', *Bhārati*, Yr. 33, 3, Āshād, 1316, 113–21. A year before, he published in the same paper, 'Ki o Keno', 32, 7, Kārtik, 1315, 329–35; 'Spashta Kathā', 32, 11, Phālgun, 1315, 515–7; 'Parichay', 32, 12, Chaitra, 1315, 571–8 and 'Kalanka Mochan', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 16, 1, Baisākh, 1316, 9(1), 55–6. These aggressive attempts to convince the public of the worth of oriental art were summarised in *Bhārat Shilpa*, 1316 (reviewed *Bhārati*, 33, 6. Āshvin, 1316, 336).
33 U. Ray (Chaudhuri), 'The Study of Pictorial Art in India', *Modern Review*, 1, 1–6, Jan.–Jun. 1907, 544–5.
34 Ray (Chaudhuri), 'Study'.
35 Gangoly, 'The Study of Indian Pictorial Art – A Rejoinder', *Modern Review*, 2, 3, Sept. 1907, 301–2.
36 T. P. Ghosh, 'Abanindranāther Chitrer Saundarja Kothāi', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 9, 1, Baisākh, 1316, 47–9. On the Platonic inner eye, see below, p. 371, an idea derived from Havell (Mitter, *Monsters*, ch. 6).
37 Ghosh, 'Abanindranāther'.
38 Roy, B. P. 'Bhāratiya Chitrakalā', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 9, 5, Bhādra, 1316, 353.
39 Chatterjee, 'Sampādaker Baktbya', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 9, 5, 1316, 354–5.
40 Gangoly, 'Bhāratiya Chitrakalā', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 9, 6, 1316, 456.
41 A. K. Coomaraswamy, 'The Present State of Indian Art', *Mod. Rev.*, 2, 2, August 1907, 108.
42 Coomaraswamy, *Essays in Indian Nationalism*, 81. See also Coomaraswamy, *Art and Swadeshi*, 129–30.
43 Quoted in *Modern Review*, 5, 1, Jan. 1909, 61; *Modern Review*, 5, 3, Mar. 1909, 272.
44 Nivedita, *Works*, 37.
45 Quoted in Gangoly, *Bhārater Shilpa*, 188–9.
46 N. Bhowmik, *Sāhitya Patrikār Parichaya o Rachanāpanji*, Calcutta, 1383 [1976], 18 on his rivalry with the Tagores. 'Matribhāsā Srāddha', *Sāhitya*, 21 Yr., 8, Agrahāyan, 1317, 522, is a particularly virulent attack on the poet. On factionalism, S. Mukherjee, in Leach and Mukherjee, *Elites* (see above, ch. 1, note 26).
47 Nivedita, *Mod. Rev.* 3, 3, 1908, 272 on Varma's Sītā.
48 *Bhārati*, Yr. 34, 2, Jaistha, 1317, 114; Yr. 33, 2, 1316, 111.
49 *Bhārati*, Yr. 34, 12, 1317, 1013. On Roychaudhuri's career including his period in London as the first ARCA, S. Dasgupta, 'Bhāskar Hironmoy Roychaudhuri', *Sundaram*, Yr. 7, 1, 1369, 52 ff.

50 *Bhārati*, Yr. 34, 12, Chaitra, 1317, 1023.
51 Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 140–1 (*Sāhitya*, 1316).
52 *Bhārati*, 'Chitra Byākhyā', Yr. 33, 1, Baisākh, 1316, 56.
53 Quoted in Basu, *Shilpāchārya*, 71.
54 *Sāhitya*, Yr. 21, 1, Baisākh, 1318, 77.
55 Nivedita, 'Shah Jahan Dreaming of the Taj', *Works*, 62–3.
56 *Sāhitya*, Yr. 21, 1, Baisākh, 1317, 63–4.
57 Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 155.
58 *Bhārati*, Yr. 33, 8, Agrahāyan, 1316, frontispiece; Samajpati quoted Basu, *Shilpācharya*, 108–9.
59 Basu, *Shilpāchārya*, 97–8.
60 *Bhārati*, Yr. 41, 7, Kārik, 1324, frontispiece; Samajpati quoted in Gangoly, 176–7.
61 Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 156–7 (*Sāhitya*, Yr. 20, 3, Āsādh, 1316, 20–1).
62 Bhowmik, *Sāhitya*, 17 ff. 87.
63 *Sāhitya*, Yr. 21, 5, Bhādra, 1317, 334–5.
64 *Sāhitya*, Yr. 21, 10, Māgh, 1317, 636 ff.
65 *Sāhitya*, Yr. 23, 1, Baisākh, 1319, 84–5.
66 *Sāhitya*, Yr. 23, 7, Kārtik, 1319, 614. Molaram of Garhwal (d. 1832) was the last of the Pahari painters. The painting is also in *Modern Review*, 13, 5, May 1914 (frontispiece).
67 Gangoly, '*Bhārater*', 180 quoting *Sāhitya*, Yr. 23, 6, Kārtik, 1319, 614.
68 *Sāhitya*, Yr. 21, 7, Agrahāyan, 1317, 455–6; Yr. 22, 2, Jyostha, 1318, 127–8; 21, 7, Kārtik, 1317, 416–7; 21, 12, Chaitra, 1317, 751; 23, 1, Baisākh, 1319, 86. On heroic landscape, Holt, *The Art of All Nations*, Princeton, 1982, xxvi. Eventually Samajpati was forced to come to terms with cultural nationalism. By 1913 illustrated archaeological essays became a regular feature (Yr. 14, 1310, 633. Yr. 23, 1319, 47, 328, 714; Yr. 24, 1320, 6, 132).
69 Gangoly, 'Bhāratiya Chitrakalā', *Prabāsi*, 10, 1(3), Āsādh, 1317, 283–4.
70 Gangoly, 'Bhāratiya', 285.
71 S. Ray, 'Bhāratiya Chitrashilpa', *Prabāsi*, Yr. 4, 1317 in Acharya and Som, *Bānglār Shilpa . . .*', 86. *Modern Review*, 2, 5, 1907, 476. On Raychaudhuri's reply to Gangoly; Mandal, *Bhārat*, I, 345 on *Prabāsi*, 1317, 283.
72 Acharya and Som, *Bānglār Shilpa*, 87–9.
73 Gangoly, 'Bhāratiya Chitrakalā', *Prabāsi*, 10, 1(6), Asvin, 1317, 614–16.
74 Ray, 'Bhāratiya Chitrakalā', in Acharya and Som, '*Bānglār Shilpa . . .*', 90–3.
75 *Sāhitya*, 21, 5, Bhādra, 1317, 333–41.
76 Quoted in Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 179.
77 Quoted in Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 158–9.
78 Gangoly, *Bhārater*, 157.
79 *Sāhitya*, Yr. 24, 8, Agrahāyan, 1320 (1913), 89–91. Akshoy Maitra offered a further review of Havell, where he accepted all his arguments except his explanation of the absence of art in the early Vedic period. The following month he greeted Vincent Smith's efforts to move away from Birdwood towards a greater appreciation of Indian fine arts (Yr. 22, Chaitra 1318, 883; Yr. 23, Baisākh 1319, 84).
80 *Rūpam*, 5, Jan. 1921, 15; 19/20, 1924, 116. A. Besant, *Indian Ideals in Art* (Kamala Lectures), Calcutta, 1925; Aurobindo, 'The Significance of Indian Art', in *Arya: A Defence of Indian Culture*, Calcutta, 1918–21 (reply to the

playwright William Archer's attack).

81 *Mānasi o Marmabāni*, Yr. 10, 2. 2, 1324–5 (1917), 180–1. *Bhārati*, Yr. 42, 1, Baisākh, 1325, 61–2.

82 A. Tagore, *Saḍaṇga*, Reprinted from *Modern Review*, May and October 1915. The complete *śloka*: Rūpabheda-pramānāni-bhāva-lāvanyayojanam-sādriśyam-varṇikābhaṅga (Yośadhara's commentary on Vātsyāyāṇa).

83 Tagore, *Saḍaṇga*. On Okakura, see above, ch. 7.

84 A. Tagore, *Some Notes on Artistic Anatomy*, 1914 (this and *Saḍaṇga* were translated into French by Andŕee Karpèles in 1922 and 1928).

85 Tagore, *Some Notes*.

10. THE PASSING OF THE AGE OF ORIENTAL ART

1 Curzon, *Lord Curzon* (see above, ch. 4, note 86), 488; Asit Haldar was Principal of Lucknow, Sailen Dey of Jaipur, Samarendra Gupta of Lahore and Debi Prasad Roy Chaudhury of Madras art school, the best-known ones.

2 Chirol, *Indian Unrest*.

3 L. Dundas, *The Heart of Aryavarta*, London, 1925, 155.

4 Dundas, *The Heart of Aryavarta*, 132.

5 Dundas, *The Heart of Aryavarta*, 125.

6 Nivedita, *Works*, 7. Foxe, *Journey*. A. Besant, *Autobiography*, H. R. Owen, 'Towards Nationwide Agitation and Organisation: the Home Rule Leagues 1915–18', in D. A. Low, ed., *Soundings in Modern South Asian History*, London, 1968, 159–95 on Besant's leadership of the leagues and her alliance with Tilak; Besant, *Essentials of an Indian Education* (speeches at the Central Hindu College – 1899–1912), Madras, 1942, 1–17, 38–70; Besant, *Anniversary Addresses*, Madras, 1904, 7. A. Basu, *Growth*. Nethercot, *Last Four Lives*, 62 ff., 86, 144 ff. (on her respect for authority), 217.

7 *The Times*, 1.1.1935, 7.

8 Havell, *Basis*, 31, 55; 'Art Administration and Swadeshi' (1907) in *Essays*, 155 ff. Sumit Sarkar, *Swadeshi*, 92–148 on the economic boycott by Congress.

9 A. Coomaraswamy, 'A Prince of Swadeshists'.

10 Broomfield, *Elite Conflict*; S. Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale*; Hall, *Heroes*, 45–6 on clash between Yeats and Sinn Fein.

11 R. Tagore, *Gorā* and *Ghare-Bāirey*, *RR*, 9, 1–350 and 407–550. Sehanbish, *Rabindranāth*; Curzon opposed proposed doctorate for Tagore at Oxford. Even Ronaldshay occasionally protested against his stand on violent politics but he was not hostile.

12 On Gandhian mobilisation of the people, Brown, *Gandhi's Rise*. Havell, 'Revival of Handicraft', *Essays*, 59. Sarkar, *Swadeshi*, 101–5, 120. M. Guha, 'Gandhiji o Nandalāl', R. P. Gupta, 'Postār Shilpa o Nandalāl', *Desh Binodan*, 1989, 119 ff. and 169 ff.

13 R. Fry, 'Oriental Art', *The Quarterly Review*, vol. 212, Nos. 422–3, Jan.–Apr. 1910, 237.

14 Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy*, 55 ff.

15 A. Tagore, 'Jāti o Shilpa', *Bāgeshwari Shilpa Prabandhābali*, Calcutta, 1975,

206–221 (lectures delivered 1921–9).

16 *Catalogue of Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Calcutta, 1922–3, B. K. Sarkar, 'Aesthetics of Young India', *Rūpam*, No. 9, 1922, 6–22; *The Futurisim of Young Asia*, Berlin, 1922. Sarkar lectured in European cities on 'unspiritual' India. But cf Hay, *Ideals*, 259–61, on Sarkar's own ambivalence about progress.

17 Mitter, 'Rabindranāth', in Lago and Warwick, *Rabindranath*, 103 ff.

18 *The Art of Jamini Roy* (Centenary Vol.), Calcutta, 1987.

19 Quoted in I. Singh, *Amrita Sher-Gil*, Delhi, 1984, 158.

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1 CHIEF SOURCES

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The Bengali era is approximately 593 years behind the European one, hence 1307 = 1900.

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'The publication of Partha Mitter's long-awaited book is warmly to be welcomed. Not only will it greatly enrich our knowledge of the artists who were active in colonial India, it will also enhance our understanding of two fundamental problems which must be of interest to every student of art history, whatever his special field: the opposing effects of culture contact and of culture clash on the emergence of national styles.' *E. H. Gombrich*

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